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Time for teams to start to show their hands

AT LAST, WE ARE ON THE BRINK OF SEEING THE FIRST glimpses of the machines that will fight it out for the 2016 Formula 1 title. With the first car launch tomorrow (Friday) by Ferrari – digitally of course, as is the style of today – and the start of testing on Monday, things are getting very serious.

Since the dramatic reduction in testing, which reaches new extremes this pre-season with only two four-day stints at Barcelona, these have effectively become extensions of the season. You could argue the Australian Grand Prix in March is actually the third round of the season following two four-day events in the wintery chill of Spain.

Literally, these tests are pointless. But in real terms they are essential. It will be here that the groundwork is done – the refinements and the real-world analysis teams need to build their season on. If you have a smooth pre-season, as Mercedes did last year with a car that ran consistently and surprised everyone by completing a race distance on the opening day of running at Jerez, then that can carry you serenely into the racing proper. Then it's difficult for anyone to catch up.

Chances are the competitive order won't be dramatically shaken up. But with Ferrari on the up, Red Bull retrenching, McLaren-Honda trying to put a horrible season behind it and teams like Williams, Force India and Toro Rosso all capable of overperforming, there are still plenty of questions to be answered.



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Moy/XPB

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COVER STORY/PRE-SEASON TESTING

F1 TESTI



NG 2016

CIRCUIT DE CATALUNYA



What is Haas in for as it gets going on track for the first time?

Do drivers really enjoy testing?

Will Pirelli's new tyre compound spice things up?

As a driver, does it make a difference which days you get and which ones your team-mate gets?

Is this round of testing more important for a top team like Mercedes or for a struggler like McLaren?

THE BIG QUESTIONS

With pre-season testing kicking off at Barcelona on Wednesday and only eight days of running before the first race of the season, what are the key things we need to learn?

By Karun Chandhok

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Will the cars sound louder this year?

THE 2016 FORMULA 1 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP OFFICIALLY KICKS OFF IN Melbourne in a few weeks' time. But for everyone involved with the teams, the pre-season tests that begin next Monday are where things really get going. The long days and nights spent at Barcelona will be where the foundations of a team's fortunes for the season are laid.

Pre-season tests are always an enjoyable time to talk to drivers, team management and engineers because they're all filled with optimism. The ones that are quick know so, and the ones that aren't have this odd internal belief that "it could be all right" cometh the hour!

How quickly will teams realise if they have good car, or one that has problems?

How do we know if someone is genuinely competitive if the leaderboard doesn't say so?



TESTING FACT

In 2015, there were 12 days of pre-season testing held at Jerez (four days) and Barcelona (eight days). In total, 22 drivers ran, completing a total of 8952 laps

How will having only eight days pre-season affect the way teams approach testing?

least add to the team's bank balances. A few months ago, I was doing a shakedown for Williams in one of their heritage cars and the guys there showed me some notes from the early 2000s when on one particular day they had four cars testing on three different circuits! The cost of testing back then must have been colossal.

On the flip side, doing just eight single-car days of testing puts a huge amount of pressure on the designers, engineers and drivers to hit the ground running. Every team will arrive at pre-season testing with a huge job list of things to validate, and compared to last year they now have just two-thirds the amount of time to do so. The pressure to correlate CFD, windtunnel and simulation figures to the race track will be huge. Without a huge regulation change, all cars are likely to be an evolution of the 2015 ones, which should make things a bit easier, but it's often the small issues that prove to be car-stoppers.

Of course, the drivers are also under pressure not to throw it in the gravel. The engineers will be aiming to do about two race distances of mileage in a single day so it'll be a lot of work. The drivers should be able to achieve the mileage and long-run targets while driving at 90 per cent. Smacking the wall and losing track time in these eight days won't make you popular!

Reducing the amount of testing has undoubtedly been the right way to go in terms of cost saving. Testing doesn't bring in any form of revenue for the teams, unlike the races. So, while people may complain about doing 21 races this year, they at

How do we know if a team is doing glory runs to grab headlines?

The key will be to see what sort of a run plan the team follows. Essentially, the guys who are confident of their performance will focus on long race runs, trying to get as much data in the bank as possible and then possibly attempt a low-fuel qualifying simulation during the last couple of days. This is why Autosport's team on the ground will be keeping an eagle eye out for the number of laps completed in each run!

Historically, we have seen many occasions when a team feels it needs to set some headlines in pre-season testing – usually to please commercial interests – but then can't replicate it come the first race. Very rarely do we see someone become a genuine surprise in testing and then also carry that forward to the season (Brawn GP in 2009 is the obvious exception that comes to mind in this case!). »



How do we know if someone is genuinely competitive if the leaderboard doesn't say so?

The number of laps on each run and choice of tyre compound will help us uncover the truth. The performance differences between the tyre compounds over a single lap could be around seven to nine tenths of a second depending on the temperatures, and the fuel weight has an effect of about 0.3s for every 10kg of fuel. Also, the engines have different modes, which could give added performance or save fuel, but this will be impossible to tell unless someone from a team actually tells us...

For example, a Sauber could be fastest on a particular day with a 1m23.2s lap and on the same day a Mercedes could do a best lap of 1m25.1s. But the Mercedes may be doing 15 laps in a row on medium-compound tyres all in the 1m25s, whereas the Sauber could have done a 1m23s on a two-lap run on super-softs and its 15-lap run on mediums could actually leave the car in the 1m26s.

It's critical to look beyond the headline lap times in testing. F1 is full of sceptics and so you can rest assured that there will be an investigation into every attention-grabbing time. "How many laps did they do on that run?"; "What tyres were they on?"; "What time of the day was it?"; "What condition was the track in?"; "What's their long-run pace like so we can see if they are genuinely quick in all conditions?". All these factors need to be considered.

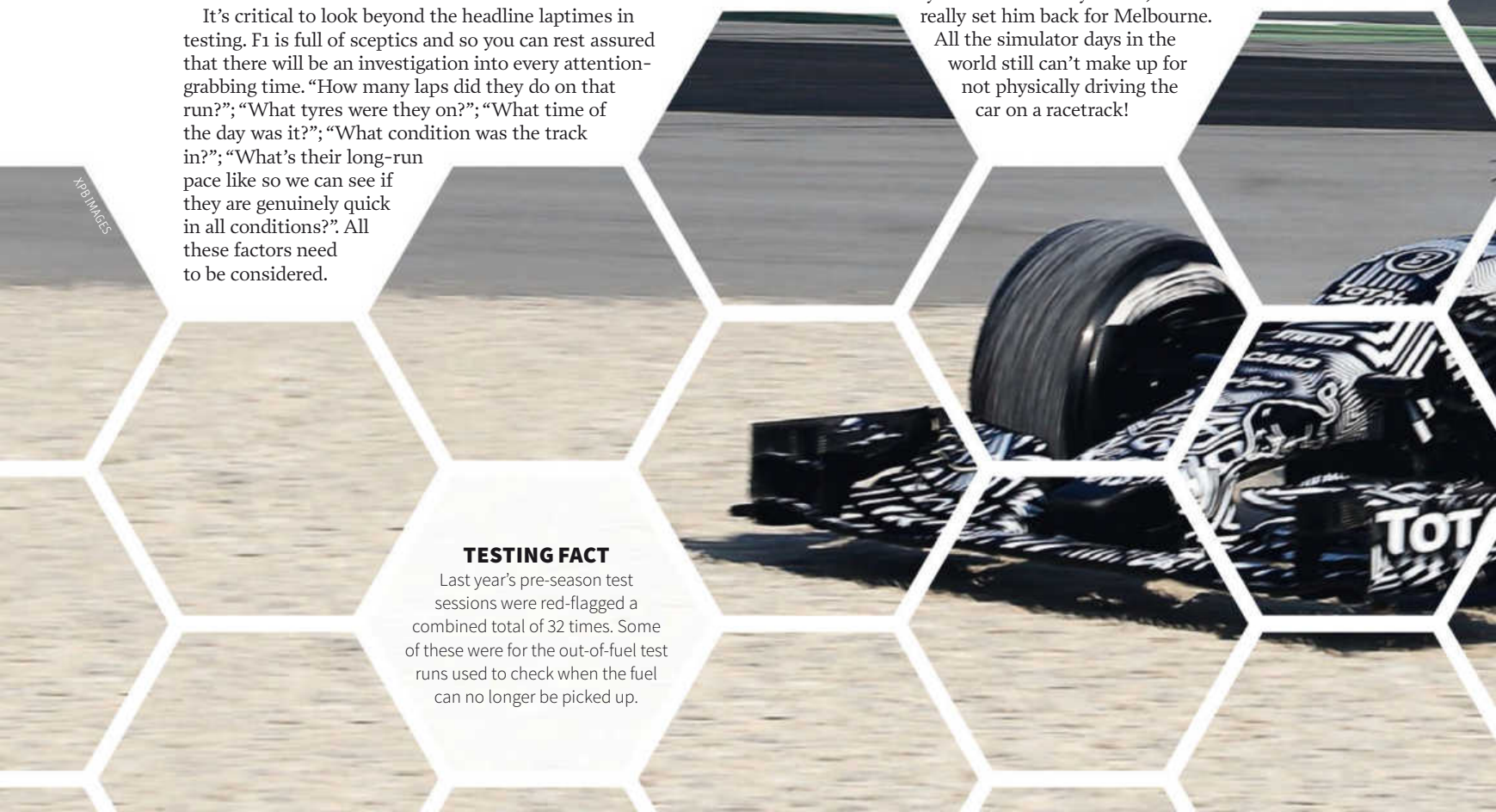
TESTING FACT

Last year's pre-season test sessions were red-flagged a combined total of 32 times. Some of these were for the out-of-fuel test runs used to check when the fuel can no longer be picked up.

As a driver, does it make a difference which days you get and which ones your team-mate gets?

This really makes a difference if your team is suffering from reliability issues. With only four days for each driver before the season, every lap that you can do and every little bit that you can learn about the car will give you an advantage when you get to Melbourne. It's always a juggling act for the teams and there is an element of luck. No driver would prefer to drive on the opening day of a test, because that's when the track is green and also the likelihood of reliability problems is higher.

Engineers would like to have continuity, so they prefer having the same driver at least for two days in a row for back-to-back comparisons, but the fairest way for the drivers is to run alternate days. We'll see different teams adopt different approaches to this but, if a driver misses one of his four days due to reliability issues, it can really set him back for Melbourne. All the simulator days in the world still can't make up for not physically driving the car on a racetrack!



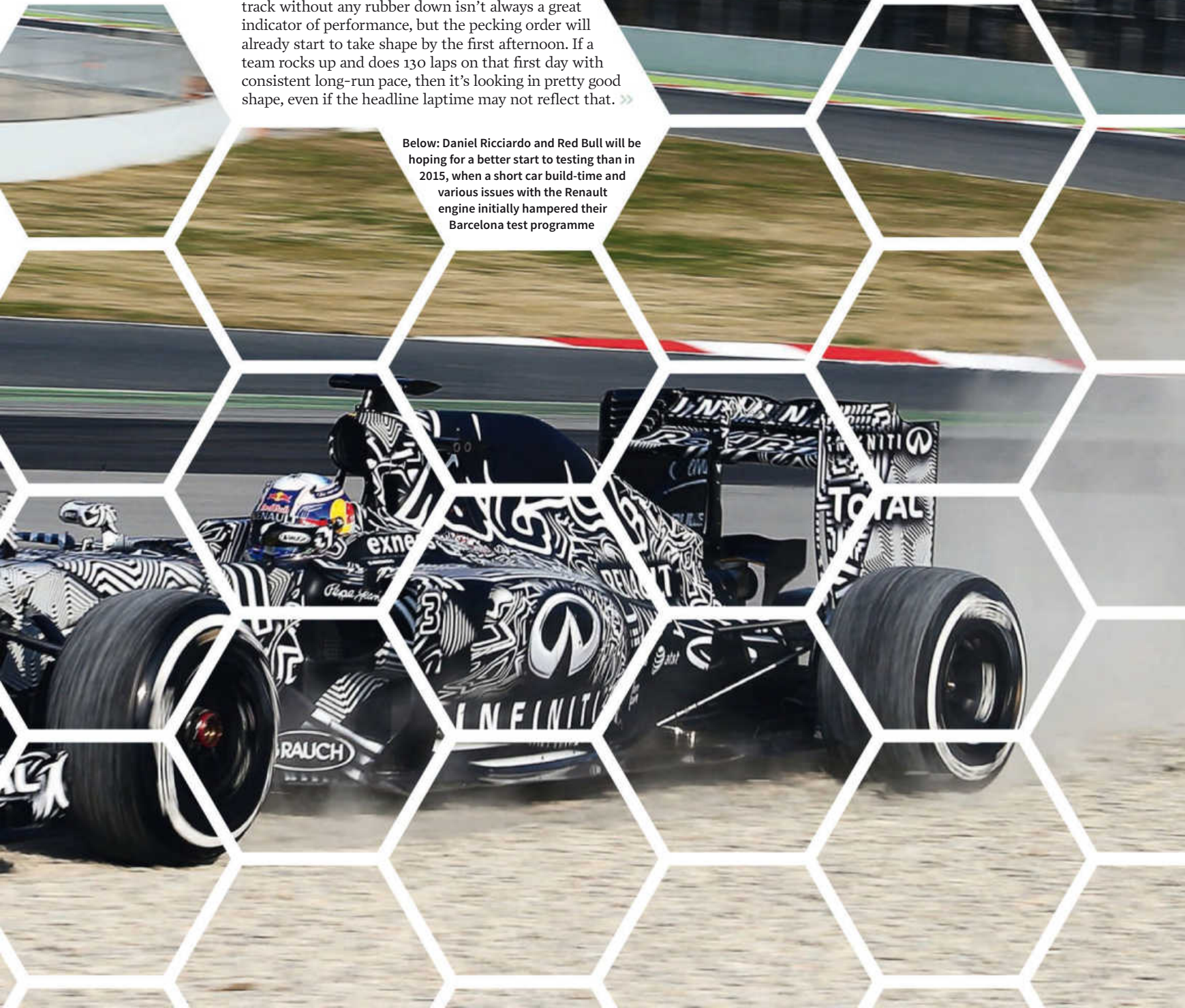
How quickly will teams realise if they have a good car, or one that has problems?

Pretty quickly! It's amazing how, within the first few laps of running, you realise whether you have a good car or one that needs a lot of work. This is not necessarily about the

laptime at an early stage, although of course that is the ultimate barometer. It's about driver feel and confidence. It's about having good reliability. It's about switching the tyres on for the short run and then making them last over a long run.

The first day of testing on a low-grip 'green' track without any rubber down isn't always a great indicator of performance, but the pecking order will already start to take shape by the first afternoon. If a team rocks up and does 130 laps on that first day with consistent long-run pace, then it's looking in pretty good shape, even if the headline laptime may not reflect that. »

Below: Daniel Ricciardo and Red Bull will be hoping for a better start to testing than in 2015, when a short car build-time and various issues with the Renault engine initially hampered their Barcelona test programme



Is this round of testing more important for a top team like Mercedes or for a struggler like McLaren?

I believe that pre-season testing is more important for the teams who had a performance deficit in 2015. The potential to improve is obviously much higher if you were further down the order last year. The folk in Woking, Maranello,

Milton Keynes and Viry-Chatillon will be very nervously loading the trucks to Barcelona, hoping and praying that the long hours spent over the winter will pay dividends.

For Toro Rosso, with a change back to Ferrari engines, the test will be vital to get that relationship up and running again, while for the returning Renault team – and its drivers Jolyon Palmer and Kevin Magnussen – the test is the first step on the long road back to stability and competitiveness. More than anyone else, these eight days of testing are going to be hugely important for Haas F1, which won't get to run its car in anger until next week's opening test.

I'm intrigued to see how things play out with the engines this year. With the regulations opening up the token system and allowing in-season development, I wonder how many people will start the season with a big update on the engine straight away and how many will aim to bring in the updates in phases as the season progresses. For Honda, this could be its chance to put its 'annus horribilis' behind it and start 2016 in a more competitive position. Last winter, McLaren did 1087 miles of testing, compared to Mercedes' 3801 miles, which tells you the story of its reliability woes as much as the lack of performance. For the sake of Formula 1, Ferrari, Red Bull, Williams, McLaren and Renault all need to be more competitive and to fight for wins again.

Mercedes will have its baseline figures from last year, so as long as the team has improved on those, it's going to be heading to Australia feeling pretty confident. The less time other people have, the less likely they are going to get caught!

Below: McLaren will be one of the teams looking to have made big gains over the winter to enable them to catch up with Mercedes



What is Haas in for as it gets going on track for the first time?

I believe Haas is coming into grand prix racing in a much better way than the last three new teams. Having raced for two of them, I know just what an uphill task it was for Hispania, Lotus and Virgin to come into F1 in 2010. At HRT,

I did my first lap in the car in qualifying at the first race!

Haas has gone for the 'outsourcing model' and enlisted some good, solid technical partners in Dallara and Ferrari. This is a very important case study for everyone in and around F1 as it could become the most cost-effective business model for the teams of the future.

From what I hear, Haas's commitment to the programme from an organisational and financial standpoint has been very impressive. They have also recruited some sensible people from other teams to help steer the ship, which is going to be crucial. People like Ayao Komatsu, Rob Taylor and Ben Agathangelou are on board and bring plenty of experience.

I worked with 'Ben Ag' and Walter Biasatti at Dallara briefly before the Hispania management fell out with them. That was a real shame because we ended up racing a launch-spec car for the season while the actual updated racecar had another 50 points of downforce, which would have transformed it! The same people are involved again and, if any chassis company can help get the project going reliably, it's Dallara. Its junior-formula and IndyCar records are very good indeed and I think it looks at the F1 project respectfully, but without the awe that other new people may do.

Gene Haas's NASCAR team has been very successful over the years and you'd have to say that, along with teams such as Hendrick, Ganassi and Penske, they are some of the most likely people to crack F1 from across the Atlantic. Haas is aiming to be a points scorer straight off the bat and the next few weeks of testing will be crucial for the team to fulfil that ambition.

Heading to Barcelona for the first test, Haas is going to be praying that the car is reliable. Racking up the laps is the first priority for any new team, especially in week one. As it heads into the second block of test days, the team can start to take the fuel out and do some performance runs because, without any previous data to go on, it's important to judge where it stands in the pecking order relative to, say, Manor and Sauber.



Will Pirelli's new tyre compound spice things up?

In this current Pirelli era of F1, maximising the tyre performance during the races and understanding tyre management have been unquestionably among the most critical things for a successful campaign.

The new ultra-soft tyre needs to be evaluated, but in any case it's going to be used only at the street races, so for the bulk of the season it's not going to be in play.

For 2016, more importantly than the ultra-soft option, there's the added element of the tyre choices, where Pirelli is allowing each driver to choose multiple compounds for a weekend. This is going to create a massive headache for the engineers and tyre strategists to work out just what tyres each driver has used and therefore what they have left... I think it could really mix things up at the start of the season, when people haven't yet settled into a rhythm, but as the season goes on the teams will all settle down and predictably start to mirror each other a bit.

The choice of compounds could also throw up some random results where, for example, a midfield team such as Toro Rosso could gamble on a different compound to other people, and all of a sudden, if the temperatures happen to fall in the right window for its choice, it could become a serious podium contender.

Will the cars sound louder this year?

Theoretically — yes! In the previous two years of the V6 hybrids, the teams ran the main exhaust through a single tailpipe, and the resulting sound caused much disappointment among fans. They now have to run an additional tailpipe to direct the air from the wastegate, so there should be a louder noise. How much louder we'll find out next week.

Frankly, the reduced noise was pretty predictable considering the design of the engines when compared to the V8s, and I never understood why people made such a big deal of it. People should really have been talking about how the cars are doing the same distance for 33 per cent less fuel, which is quite staggering if you think about it in the real-world sense of things.

I actually don't mind the sound of the cars anyway. It means you can watch the cars trackside and still hold a conversation!

TESTING FACT

Pirelli offers all tyre compounds for use in pre-season testing, with teams selecting what they use. Last year, a total of 706 sets were used, with the most popular set being the medium compound (331 sets were used)

Do drivers really enjoy testing?

If not, they should get a desk job! In this current era of F1 there are so few opportunities to drive the race car on track so the drivers should really enjoy every chance they get. The work you do in pre-season testing is vital to on-track success, so any driver who wants genuinely to do well will be motivated to learn and develop the package as much as possible in testing.

If you rewind the clock to the 1990s or early 2000s, when testing was unlimited and the teams were pounding round and round every week, I can understand why the race drivers sometimes felt like they needed some time off and perhaps didn't really enjoy the testing. Today, apart from a few guys doing the wet-tyre test in January, the drivers are coming off the back of 12 weeks of no driving, so they'll be itching to go. 🏁

BARCELONA THE PERFECT TEST TRACK

Barcelona has long been a favourite venue for testing among grand prix teams, and hosts all eight days of this year's pre-season. So who better to explain the appeal than a locally-born F1 super-tester?

By Pedro de la Rosa

 @PedrodeRosa1



TESTING FACT

Pedro de la Rosa has spent a year of his life driving in official F1 tests – completing 365 days from 1999-2014

BARCELONA IS POSSIBLY THE TEAMS' favourite test track in Europe. I love the track. At McLaren, my nickname was the Barcelona Bullet. I was quick there because I knew how the track would evolve during the day. Here is why I think teams return to the Circuit de Catalunya.

Combination of corners

One of the main reasons it works so well as a test track is the combination of corners. Modern F1 tracks designed by Hermann Tilke do not feature long constant-radius corners — they are slow-speed 90-degree or hairpin turns.

Barcelona is an old track designed originally for motorbikes, so most of the corners have a long radius. You are in a corner for a long time and that helps you feel the car balance, which in turns helps with set-up.

The circuit is also very hard on the tyres and that means it's useful for the tyre supplier to carry out testing there. It is tough on the front-left tyre, especially because of Turn 3. In a race, you should pace yourself a bit through Turn 3 because you can gain five hundredths of a second through there just by being flat-out, but you kill the front-left tyre very fast.

In qualifying, you have to attack Turn 3 like there is no tomorrow. It's a tricky corner mainly because you can't approach it from a complete clean angle from

Turn 2. It's a particularly good corner to set up the aero balance.

The track evolution

You have to be careful in Barcelona with the wind. From 9am-11am, that is the period when you have to set a quick time because the atmosphere is cold and the fresh air gives you more downforce and a bit more engine power. During the day, the temperature rises quite steadily and the wind picks up.

The changing conditions, temperature and also the wind level and direction can affect times so it's not one of the most consistent tracks. You can be fast in the morning, then slower during lunchtime and then the pace picks up last thing in the afternoon. It's a bit tricky to read the track.

Sometimes the car is better at lunchtime but your lap times are one second slower. I always paid a lot of attention to the wind level and direction because it can destroy Turn 3. If there is a headwind or tailwind into Turn 2 or braking into Turn 1, it will upset the car. I always asked my engineers to give me the wind level and direction information.

It's the best track I've ever been to for testing. You have to be very precise and complete your programme in a scientific manner. Timing of the day is important.

The race or qualifying is usually at 2pm, so there is no point in having a brilliant set-up on the car between 9am and 11am because there are going to be very different track conditions at 2pm. So it's good to be testing at 2pm, rather than having the lunch break.

The teams' knowledge

We have been testing in Barcelona for many years now so the teams, tyre suppliers and engine manufacturers all have a lot of data and reference points for the venue. They always want to go back there because there is nothing better than testing against something you know.

There are other good tracks in Spain such as Motorland Aragon, where a lot of Le Mans 24 Hours teams test. But because there hasn't been a proper F1 test there, the teams



don't want to go because they have nothing to compare against.

I always pushed to accumulate data on other tracks but teams tell me they don't want to experiment because there are now so few days testing during the year. If F1's bosses do not ease testing restrictions, which looks unlikely, I think Barcelona will stay as the main test track.

Consistently good weather

With so little testing, good weather is vitally important as teams look to iron out the kinks ahead of the season. In Barcelona, there is very little rainfall.

If you go there for a four-day test, you know there is a 90 per cent possibility you will have three days minimum of good weather. In my experience, bad conditions have never lasted more than a day. So the consistent weather in Barcelona is another plus.

My Barcelona memories

I have many memories of testing there.

When I tested for Arrows in 1999, it was my first year in F1 and we were practising a pit stop at 5.59pm, just before testing ended.

We were in the last garage and when I pulled away, I suddenly saw this barrier come across the pitlane exit. I braked with full pressure, locking the four wheels and then hit the barrier. It was the most embarrassing moment in my career!

I don't know why he pulled that barrier across at 6pm on the dot. He was obviously looking forward to going home!

Then in 2000, I was on the start-finish straight and, as I passed the pitlane exit, the front wing collapsed and went under my car. I braked, locked the wheels and ended up in the gravel at Turn 1. I did 300 metres with locked front tyres. It was a huge lock-up and a scary moment.

I didn't hit anything but had the front wing collapsed 100 metres later, I would have suffered a heavy impact. Most of the accidents that I have had there have been due to failures testing new parts, but that is part of the job because you are accumulating mileage on lots of parts during a session. ✎

Pedro de la Rosa was speaking to Lawrence Barretto



HOW A TEAM GOES TESTING

Eight days of pre-season testing begin next Monday at Barcelona's Circuit de Catalunya with an initial burst of four days of running. Here's how teams make the most of every lap they complete

By Gary Anderson, technical expert

 @autosport

TESTING IS ALL ABOUT UNDERSTANDING THE CAR AND ITS INHERENT POSITIVES and negatives. Every car has its own DNA – that is something that you can never change – but it is very important to understand it if you are going to get the best from what you have.

Testing used to be about heading blind into running the car and then you would go through various different set-ups to identify its strong or weak points. Today, the majority of this will be done on the teams' simulation rigs.

You could say that nowadays there is actually a huge amount more testing than there used to be because the teams will run their simulation rigs twenty-four-seven. Doing this allows them to arrive at the first test with a better understanding of the car's set-up requirements. But any simulation rig is only as good as the data you are using to drive it. If there is something inherently wrong with the data then it won't show up in the car's performance until it hits the track.

The first test will be all about making sure the car is producing what your research says it should do. The mechanical set-up will have been fairly well optimised from the simulation rigs. It will need a little bit of tinkering with, but this will not be a priority for the first week of testing.

We hear a lot about aero testing, and this is the most important part of a chassis's performance. Teams will fit various rigs for measuring aerodynamic flow and pressures. They will do constant speed tests down the straights, preferably in two

or three different directions (if the track configuration allows) on each lap to reduce any wind influence.

During these runs, they will also measure the load on the suspension components. All of this data will then be compared to the theoretical data to make sure the car is not suffering from some strange characteristics that the research data don't show.

As the week progresses, you will start to hone in on any potential aerodynamic problems. Time for rectifying such problems before the first race is short, so identifying these early is very important.

Those first few laps with any new car are a bit like when you are present at the birth of a child! After all, it's your new baby and you actually know just about as quickly as you do with your children if everything is OK or not.

If the driver can do a run of about five timed laps, he will know how the car feels. You can't hold a car back – you have to let it have its head and, taking into account the fuel load you are running, the driver will have a very good feeling of the balance and the potential laptime. Those two things never lie.

Aerodynamics will always be the prime mover in chassis performance. As the early days are about making sure the car

F1 teams' top technical brass will have a big role to play in testing – as our author did back in his days wearing the headset

TESTING FACT

From 2009 to 2015, F1 teams completed a total of 116,211 miles of official testing at Barcelona over 45 days

is performing as predicted aerodynamically, you will also be gathering data on and assessing reliability. If reliability problems are cropping up and reducing track time, that's something that must be eliminated.

Testing is about long, hard days. And the end of a day's running is, in reality, when the work really starts. The teams will run a shift system for testing. Normally, the guys who run the cars during the day will hand over to another group of people and they will carry out the overnight maintenance.

There will be some personnel that will overlap, but in general over a four-day test a 10-hour day is enough for anyone. If you are asking personnel to do more than this, then the risk level of a mistake is increasing dramatically.

The current cars are so sophisticated that if you don't dot the 'i's and cross the 't's on everything, you can lose hours of running the next day. Why would a team spend all that money just to potentially throw it away by overworking the staff?

Looking back to the track, race simulations are actually the most important thing you do in testing. You need to simulate a complete race weekend and that includes all the heat soaks that the car goes through while it is sitting on the grid or during a pitstop, as these are the things that can bite you.

Even if you have done all this you can still get bitten. When I was with Stewart, we did all our preparation for the start of the season, but still, when we got to Australia, both our cars suffered a problem sitting on the grid. To minimise the weight of the engine, it had carbon cam covers. These

had a heat shield between them and the exhaust system and during testing we didn't have any problems. But sitting on the grid, the heat from the exhaust pipes overheated the cam covers and they started leaking oil onto the exhaust system and covered both cars in a plume of oil smoke.

Later, we found out that a different supplier had made the cam covers for the race engines and they had used a different, lower-temperature material.

You will have a good idea of where you stand in the competitive order during testing. Every team will have a person, if not two, who will sit down with every laptime – actually, every sector time – that the other cars have done, and do their best to build a performance model of the other cars. This will be compared to their own car and used to try to identify where they are better or worse than the opposition. Teams will also be measuring other cars' speeds at various locations around the track. They will then use this to try to determine car acceleration and from that derive power-unit performance.

It is actually one of the most important things that comes out of testing. You normally know pretty quickly where you are as far as your car performance is concerned, but it is only from testing and racing that you know about the opposition.

That's a lot to get done in just eight days of testing – but what happens over the next few weeks will have a big impact on the 2016 season. ❧



Formula 3: Where have

F3's biggest problem seems to be one of perception over the effect of wealthy investors at the leading teams, namely Prema Powerteam (through Lawrence Stroll, father of Lance), Hitech

Jos Claes, F3 project manager at constructor Dallara, which supplies the category's customer teams, says "it's not a simple question".



F3 BUDGET RISES

HOW TIGHT RULES PUSH UP F3 COSTS

IRONICALLY, IT IS THE gradual tightening of Formula 3's technical regulations over the years that has led to a rise in development costs.

"The regulations are already very severe on what can be changed," says Dallara's Jos Claes (above). "It's very different to what F3 was in the past, where teams would make cars longer or wider or change bodywork."

"Now you can go in the wind-tunnel as much as you want, but if there is any very small advantage to be had it will be at a high cost, because the areas are so restricted there's not a lot you can do."

"You can see Prema run around with a near-standard car other than a few add-ons that are very easy to spot, and which you can take a few pictures of! But where is this billionaire technical advantage?"

"Look at Hitech at Hockenheim last year – they had an absolutely standard car [which Alexander Sims qualified less than a tenth of a second off pole position on the team's second outing]."

Costs have risen off track too, with entry fees going up for 2016. West-Tec's Mick Kourou also believes that a new GP2/3-style sporting regulation, whereby teams could be forced to pay a fine for missing a round, could lead to cheaper deals to avoid the risk of penalties, further risking teams' long-term viability.

MARCUS SIMMONS

all the drivers gone?

"At the moment people say a lot about the billionaire teams being responsible for what is happening now. I think there is a bit of truth in this, but this is the latest reason added to a list of other reasons that have not disappeared."

"We cannot avoid billionaire teams – everyone is free to have a team and as long as they are accepted we should be happy, whether they are owned by billionaires or not. But it [the drop in entries] is caused by different things. For the last few years we have seen the same team winning [Prema], which we saw in the past. Last year we did not see the effect because we had the very positive effect of Max Verstappen, where everyone went to F3 as a way to get to F1 the year after."

"But if you took Felix Rosenqvist [2015 champion] away from Prema, then Prema would likely not have won the championship and it would have been Carlin with Antonio Giovinazzi instead, yet Trevor [Carlin] is struggling."

While teams struggle to turn a profit even on such high budgets, Claes adds that the necessary

safety developments add to the expense, as well as the travel costs. Some people even suggest that the current rot set in back in 2003, when the French and German championships merged to form the Euro Series – the predecessor of the current championship – and F3 moved away from a national platform. With the FIA moving to re-establish a second tier of regional F3, this could allow a cut-price alternative, with an after-market for second-hand cars helping top-level teams.

"We have seen Formula 4 take off," says Claes, "so why are so few moving up to F3? Maybe doubling the budget for a season [from F4 to F3] is painful, but tripling it is just not possible; maybe this championship is too expensive, too early in drivers' careers. That's why I was always in favour of stronger national championships, with everyone coming together for the Masters, Macau and Pau. I hope to see regional F3 recreated in Europe, for no more than double the price of F4."

MARCUS SIMMONS

"We have seen F4 take off, so why are so few moving to F3?"

WHY MERCEDES BACKS WEHRLEIN AT MANOR IN F1

THE MANOR TEAM confirmed Pascal Wehrlein as one of its drivers for 2016 last week. Support from Mercedes was key to the deal, and there's a good reason that the manufacturer is so keen on the 21-year-old DTM champion.

Having started last year as a relatively quiet character, he grew during 2015 on his way to the championship and was completely at ease in the limelight when he wrapped up the title with one race to spare. What had emerged in public was closer to what people said was his funny and friendly off-track personality.

What was more impressive was the robustness of his public profile – the positivity could easily have been lost, following the controversial 'push him out' saga at the Red Bull Ring round in August.

"If Audi has to win a championship like this, I would say they've started a big war today," he said after the race.

"I hope they will have consequences, I hope everyone is writing about this situation, what Audi was starting. I hope no one is buying an Audi next week."

Those comments earned him some criticism in Germany, which hurt Wehrlein. But fortunately it didn't send him into his shell.

On-track, he was massively impressive.

After that Red Bull Ring round, Wehrlein was 17 points behind Mattias Ekström, and you'd have put money on the Swede taking a third DTM title, especially given the speed of the 2015 Audi.

But he fumbled, and Wehrlein stayed strong over the next four events. With 13 of the series' 24 drivers winning a race, consistency was going to win you the title, and Wehrlein had that.

"Pascal did the best job of anyone all year," Mercedes stablemate Gary Paffett said of Wehrlein's 2015.

"You always seemed to be looking at his data, trying to figure out what he was doing differently.

"He rarely had a bad day, and he's a fighter in the races as well. People think maybe it came easily and he just got in the car and did the job, but you'd go into the engineering office at night and he'd be in there talking to the engineers.

"Sometimes you have that year where you know what you want from the car and your engineer knows how to give you that. And that's the year he had – he turned up and every time he managed to get the best, or nearly the best, out of the car."

MITCHELL ADAM

The truth of Alfa's F1 plans

Should we take talk of Alfa Romeo returning to grand prix racing for the first time since 1985 seriously?

A

ANYONE CAN TELL YOU THAT IN FORMULA 1 TALK is cheap, as attested to by unfulfilled promises from optimistic race promoters, budding team owners, wannabe drivers, and even motor manufacturers. Mention any nascent F1 programme and not only does the news go global within seconds, it persists – a 2014 hint from VW management that Audi was investigating F1 still provides news fodder two years on.

Thus recent comments by Fiat Group CEO Sergio Marchionne that "Alfa Romeo can and must consider the possibility of return to race in Formula 1" understandably sent the world's Alfa enthusiasts into raptures. But they should not be construed as a signal that the venerable brand's F1 comeback is imminent.

The word "consider" looms large in Marchionne's statement, which he uttered during a recent interview with Italy's *Gazzetta dello Sport*. His remarks must be viewed through that prism, particularly given his penchant for making provocative comments while talking up the resurrected brand he pitches at sporty Mercedes, BMW and Audi models.

Powertrain sharing with Ferrari – technically not part of the Fiat family after the recent IPO, but still a close relative – could provide Alfa Romeo with a cost-effective entry into F1 while doubling Marchionne's political clout within the sport. It also makes marketing sense: the sportiest Giulia shares its V6 engine architecture with the unit being developed by Ferrari for the "entry level" Dino due for 2018 launch.

It is no secret Alfa Romeo pushed back Giulia variant launches owing to budget constraints, so the ability to fund an F1 programme along with the massive investments required by Fiat Chrysler products on both sides of the Atlantic is questionable, particularly since Marchionne hinted Alfa could also build its own engine for installation in an in-house chassis.

Given Fiat Chrysler is the only global motor manufacturer with more debt (£5 billion at last count) than cash, such a programme would require substantial support from partners and/or F1's commercial rights holder.

Renault's return via Lotus is believed to have hinged on generous commercial terms from FOM, back-loaded so the majority of income flows after the expiration of the current team agreements in 2020. Such a deal would not, though, solve the conundrum of F1's Strategy Group being over-subscribed until 2020. Would Marchionne accept that Williams has such a voice and Alfa Romeo not? That is a potential sticking point.

The expedient solution would be to acquire an existing team such as Sauber, whose Hinwil base is but 200 miles from Alfa Romeo's Milan HQ, and provides the infrastructure required to support an F1 programme – courtesy of BMW's noughties upgrades. Plus Sauber has decades of experience of working with Italians. That would be cheaper than talk...

DIETER RENCKEN





WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

WRC Sweden secured

RALLY SWEDEN'S FUTURE IN THE World Rally Championship is secure until 2019 – its future in Karlstad, the city that has hosted the event since 1973, far less so.

Months of negotiations between event CEO Glen Olsson and the WRC ended in agreement on Sunday after the late arrival of cold weather saved this year's rally, but he admitted finding a new home was a big task.

"Here in Karlstad we have a massive fan base for the rally," Olsson told *Autosport*. "If we go north, we have to go way north to be snow-sure and there we don't have the same population, so we lose that revenue stream."

"We don't have agreement from municipalities to support the event and, potentially, don't have the accommodation."

The ski resort of Are is talked about as an option, but Olsson says the event has to go further to guarantee winter conditions. Another alternative could be to remain in Karlstad, but with more competition across the border in Norway, where higher altitude roads mean a better likelihood of snow.

Sweden winner Sebastien Ogier said: "This is an iconic event, but because of global warming, the time has come to go north."

DAVID EVANS

TOP 3

German street/road tracks

After confirmation of a new Berlin street circuit for Formula E (see right), here are Germany's finest examples of the genre



#1 SOLITUDE

The fast, challenging track west of Stuttgart never hosted a world championship grand prix (it did host non-points Formula 1 races), but it had shades of the best of the Nordschleife and Spa.



#2 NORISRING

Remember those infamous pictures of Nazi rallies? Well, they were held using the Steintribune in the centre of this track. Fast, challenging and still in use by DTM, it's a spectacular track.



#3 AVUS

The ultra-fast Berlin autobahn track boasted 'wall of death' corners and terrifyingly high speeds even in the pre-war years. It was last used at the end of the 20th century.

IN THE HEADLINES



ITALIAN GP DEAL HOPES ON HOLD

Italian Grand Prix bosses are to meet Bernie Ecclestone later this month after a recent meeting to secure Monza's future on the calendar proved inconclusive. It had been hoped that a deal would be agreed in the earlier talks.

PALMER: MAGNUSSEN'S BIG MOTIVATION

Jolyon Palmer feels Renault team-mate Kevin Magnussen will be even stronger on his return to the Formula 1 grid as he tries to prove McLaren was wrong to axe him. "He's now going to be unbelievably motivated to show McLaren why he shouldn't have been dropped."

MERCEDES JUNIORS IN F1 ON MERIT

Toto Wolff is pleased to see young stars earning a place in Formula 1 based on merit after Mercedes-backed drivers Pascal Wehrlein and Esteban Ocon secured roles for 2016. "Pascal and Esteban have proven themselves to be among the top young drivers," he said.

ENGINE ONLY DOUBT FOR RED BULL

Engine performance is Red Bull's only doubt going into the 2016 season, according to Daniel Ricciardo. "It's always going to be dependent on which engine we have and that's going to dictate the success," he said.

HULKENBERG FEELING THE FORCE

Nico Hulkenberg believes Force India has a solid foundation on which to attack the new F1 season after making good progress last season. "Now it is our job to keep working at it and to build on that," he said.

GROSJEAN TRIES VIRTUAL HAAS CAR

Romain Grosjean feels Formula 1 newcomer Haas has a strong base on which to develop its car after his first experience of the debut challenger in the simulator. "The sensations were quite good," he said.

JORDAN JOINS TOP GEAR TEAM

Long-time Formula 1 team boss Eddie Jordan has been announced as part of the presenting line-up for the BBC's new incarnation of *Top Gear*.

FORMULA E COULD RACE AT NORISRING

Formula E has confirmed that the Berlin round will go ahead with a race on the streets of the German capital. An 11-corner track will be used for the May 21 event instead of the former Tempelhof airport, which is being used to house more than one thousand refugees.





TOURING CARS

RETIRING RYDELL IS ALL-TIME GREAT

RICKARD RYDELL CAN rightly claim to have established himself as a modern tin-top legend after hanging up his helmet at the age of 48.

The Swede notched up 21 victories in the British Touring Car Championship, as well as winning the 1998 crown with Volvo. He also claimed five victories in the World Touring Car Championship and a Scandinavian title.

"I've only done a few races over the past couple of years, and if I can't do a full season, I'd prefer to stop," he said of his decision. "I feel very privileged that for 20 years I had a manufacturer contract. I don't think too many drivers can say that."

Rydell said the highlights of his career were winning the Macau Formula 3 Grand Prix in 1992 with the TOM'S team, claiming the BTCC title with Volvo, and scoring a GT1 class victory at the Le Mans 24 Hours with Aston Martin in 2007. He also said that his victory in the Swedish-based Scandinavian Touring Car Championship with the NIKA Chevrolet team meant a lot to him.

Rydell will retain an involvement in motorsport though his links with Swedish GP2 racer Gustav Malja, who will race with the Rapax team in 2016.

"I'll be helping him on the sporting side as well as commentating on GP2 for Swedish TV," said Rydell.

GARY WATKINS



IMSA SPORTSCAR CHAMPIONSHIP

Ford upbeat about GT fixes after troubled race debut

FORD IS CONFIDENT IT HAS SOLVED THE PROBLEMS that delayed its two new GTs on the car's debut at last month's Daytona 24 Hours.

The transmission issues that resulted in the two Chip Ganassi Racing Ford GTs respectively finishing 32 and 160 laps behind the GT Le Mans-winning Chevrolet Corvette C7.R in the opening round of the IMSA SportsCar Championship have been identified, according to Ford Performance director Dave Pericak.

The reason for the two cars becoming jammed in gear early in the race has been traced to what Pericak described as a "supplier issue" with the gearbox actuator.

"There was a design change made to the part that we were not aware of and that led to the failure," he explained.

The issue that led to the failure of the Ricardo gearbox in the #67 car has also been identified. Pericak said that Ford was "now working to validate the solution".

Pericak revealed that Ford's target was to prove it has a reliable car from the next round of the IMSA series, the Sebring 12 Hours on March 19. Although Sebring is a shorter event, it is a notorious car-breaker and ideal preparation ahead of Ford's four-car GTE Pro class assault on the Le Mans 24 Hours in June.

"We are going to be testing to flush out any other problems," he said. "We have to be done by Sebring, so we can prove we are ready for Le Mans. We want to demonstrate that to the world."

GARY WATKINS



NASCAR SPRINT CUP

NASCAR's new team dawn

NASCAR LEGEND RICHARD PETTY called the introduction of a team charter system in Sprint Cup "the second most important date in NASCAR history", only behind the day the series was formed.

Thirty-six teams have been granted the nine-year charters, designed to give participating teams a bigger say in the running of the series and more stability. The charter teams are

guaranteed starting spots for all rounds, and with fields reduced from 43 to 40 starters, that leaves just four places for non-charter teams.

The charters are transferable, and the two awarded to the defunct Michael Waltrip Racing outfit have been acquired by Stewart-Haas Racing and Joe Gibbs Racing for their Kurt Busch and Carl Edwards entries.

"The new charter programme

strengths each of our businesses individually and the team model, which is good for NASCAR, our fans, drivers, sponsors and the people who we employ," said Rob Kauffmann, co-owner of Chip Ganassi Racing.

"This is a giant step forward made possible by [chairman] Brian France, setting a new course for the industry and the owners coming together."

BRUCE MARTIN



NASCAR SPRINT CUP

Elliott's Daytona pole

BACK IN THE DAY WHEN HE WAS “Awesome Bill From Dawsonville”, Bill Elliott won the Daytona 500 pole in 1985, ’86, ’87 and 2001. On Sunday, it was his son Chase’s turn as the 20-year-old became the youngest pole winner in Daytona 500 history, driving the #24 Hendrick Motorsports Chevrolet made famous by Jeff Gordon.

Elliott edged out Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota driver Matt Kenseth by 0.026s. This guarantees the duo places on the front row regardless of what happens in the two qualifying duel races today (Thursday).

“This is a very, very cool day,” said Elliott after taking pole position. “I don’t know that this opportunity has sunk in yet, much less sitting on the pole for the Daytona 500. So this is very cool. The big thing is Daytona 500 qualifying is about the team guys, and the effort they put into these cars, and nothing special I did.”

Elliott’s predecessor Gordon and crew chief Alan Gustafson experienced much success in qualifying at Daytona. So the 2014 Nationwide Series champion, who has only five NASCAR Sprint Cup starts to his name, wanted to make sure he did his part as the driver without making any mistakes in a pressure situation where only the top two qualifiers were locked into the Daytona 500 field on Sunday.

“I think definitely coming into today, knowing those guys had a lot of success over the course of 2015 – and this is the same car he had a lot of success with last year [added to the pressure],” explained Elliott. “We were really fast both of those

days [in opening qualifying]. But I definitely didn’t want to mess anything up.

“It’s pretty straightforward I think from the driving side. But I found a way to mess up there that first go. I stalled it and didn’t get going like I needed to. I still didn’t get going like I needed to that second round, but fortunately it was enough.”

The field for all Sprint Cup races has been cut to 40 cars this year (see opposite page), and 36 of those entrants are locked in thanks to their status as charter teams. Both Ryan Blaney and Matt DiBenedetto have qualified on speed, so six drivers will be battling for two spots in the field. They are 2007 Daytona 500 polesitter David Gilliland, Michael McDowell, Robert Richardson Jr, Cole Whitt, Josh Wise and Reed Sorenson.

BRUCE MARTIN

DAYTONA 500 QUALIFYING

POS	DRIVER	MAKE	SPEED
1	Chase Elliott	Chevrolet	196.314mph
2	Matt Kenseth	Toyota	196.036mph
3	Dale Earnhardt Jr	Chevrolet	195.682mph
4	Kyle Busch	Toyota	195.207mph
5	Ricky Stenhouse Jr	Ford	195.118mph
6	Jimmie Johnson	Chevrolet	194.839mph
7	Ryan Blaney	Ford	194.746mph
8	Austin Dillon	Chevrolet	194.675mph
9	Carl Edwards	Toyota	194.662mph
10	Denny Hamlin	Chevrolet	194.523mph

IN THE HEADLINES

MATSUSHITA CONFIRMED AT ART

GP2 race winner Nobuharu Matsushita will continue at ART alongside Sergey Sirotkin in 2016. ART has also added another Honda protege, Japanese F3 graduate Nirei Fukuzumi, for its GP3 team.

FERRARI PROTEGE LANDS F3 DEAL

Chinese Ferrari protege Guan Yu Zhou will complete Motopark’s line-up in this season’s Formula 3 European Championship. He joins Red Bull juniors Sergio Sette Camara and Niko Kari as well as Joel Eriksson at the team.

MORENO LANDS AGURI RESERVE ROLE

Team Aguri has named Ecuadorian Julio Moreno as its reserve in Formula E. He will also continue to race for T-Sport, having raced in the F3 European Championship last year, but will compete in EuroFormula Open.

JACKSON CONFIRMED AT MOTORBASE

British Touring Car Championship race winner Mat Jackson has joined 2013 champion Andrew Jordan in the Motorbase Performance line-up in the series this season at the wheel of a Ford Focus. Sam Tordoff’s place at WSR has also been confirmed.

BMR RECRUITS COLE

James Cole has completed the Team BMR British Touring Car Championship line-up. Cole, who made his debut in the BTCC in 2013, joins Jason Plato, Colin Turkington and Warren Scott in one of the team’s four Subaru Levorgs.

OCON CONFIRMED IN MERCEDES SQUAD

GP3 champion and Renault reserve driver Esteban Ocon will race in the DTM this year. He takes the place vacated by F1-bound Pascal Wehrlein in the eight-car line-up.

CARROLL GETS GULF PORSCHE DRIVE

Adam Carroll will make his World Endurance Championship debut this season as part of the entry that will return a Gulf Porsche to the Le Mans 24 Hours. He will partner Porsche Supercup podium finisher Ben Barker and Gulf Racing team co-founder Mike Wainwright in a GTE Am Porsche 991 RSR.

WILLIAMSON MAKES RACING RETURN

Lewis Williamson, the 2010 McLaren Autosport BRDC Award winner, will return to full-time racing in ’16 with Strakka in the Renault Sport RS01 Championship. The 26-year-old last competed regularly in GP3 in 2013.

CHILTON SURPRISED BY FIRST TEST

Max Chilton says he exceeded his own expectations during his first IndyCar test with Chip Ganassi Racing at Sonoma last week (below). Chilton, who has five days of testing ahead of his rookie season, added: “It was a bit of a shock.”



FEEDBACK

Is F1 in need of a firm hand?

The start of Ian Parkes's column (Feb 11) re the mooted rules package for 2017 sounded promising: bolder, more aggressive cars, wider front and rear tyres – terrific. Then came the downer: wider front and rear wings. Surely one of the problems with overtaking in F1 is the turbulent air generated by the wings.

It appears there has been a discussion about generating more mechanical grip, presumably leading to less reliance on aerodynamics and hence more overtaking opportunities. We can only assume that the teams, having now invested huge sums of money in aerodynamics, have thrown a wobbly (technical term) at the prospect of losing all that technology, so we will be back to square one.

You have to feel for Pirelli. Ian states they have been put in an invidious position and we can only agree. How can they possibly develop the tyres necessary if they have no access to a suitable car?

The teams have lobbied for a greater say in the running of F1 for years, but there are far too many vested interests

for any cohesive and sensible solutions to arise with any chance of success, so we will be left with the same old, same old issues of yore.

We complained of the heavy-handed approach by Jean-Marie Balestre et al, but one does wonder if there should be a return to one person calling the shots and/or banging heads together in order to get some sense in the decision-making process.

Neil Davey
Ivybridge, Devon

Mann of the moment

Pippa Mann, hats off to you (Letters, Feb 11), and not because of chivalrous reasons – just for being a racing driver talking sense. If you do live out your 'dairytale', may you go on the Borg-Warner Trophy as Pippa Mann, not 'Pipped a Man'.

PS Susie Wolff, F1 didn't go as planned, but there are other series out there. It might be called Formula 1, but it's not necessarily the number-one formula. But many who've retired have inspired.

Balestre was a divisive figure, but there's an argument to be made for an F1 strongman

Lastly, well done *Autosport*, *Motorsport News*, etc for making reading about F1 past and present/background and foreground far more enjoyable than watching that bit from red lights being extinguished right through to cap-throwing... and to the BBC for not wasting any more money.

All other forms of motorsport are available...

Patrick Palmer (F1 fan 1984-2002)
By email

No driver? No point!

I can't think of anything more pointless than driverless racing (How will driverless cars impact on motorsport?, Feb 11). If I want to watch digital racing I can play on a PC. Don't waste space in your magazine with such nonsense.

Bob Bull
By email

Time for a proper snow rally

Sadly we've once more had the (almost) annual 'will it/won't it' question with regard to running the Swedish Rally.

The WRC really does need the visuals of a snow rally so it must be time for a pragmatic decision to move the event somewhere where the snow can be guaranteed. If that means a country such as Finland getting two WRC rounds (Rally Finland and Arctic) then so be it.

Formula 1 manages it with the European GP so let's end the risk factor and secure a winter rally for the WRC.

Keith Oswin
Brentford



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F1's got talent

F1 bosses must urgently address the need to encourage young, gifted drivers into motorsport's top category

By Lawrence Barretto, F1 Reporter

[@lawrobarretto](#)

NEWS THAT PASCAL WEHRLEIN HAS SECURED A place on the Formula 1 grid is a shot in the arm for grand prix racing. To have the reigning DTM champion move up to the so-called pinnacle of motorsport is just what should happen.

It means there will be at least two rookies on the grid as 2014 GP2 champion Jolyon Palmer makes his debut with Renault. And there is also a foot in the door for reigning GP3 champion Esteban Ocon, who takes up a Renault reserve role.

There will always be a long list of drivers talented enough to compete in F1, but who never even come close. Only a fraction can make it, but that's the same at the top level of any sport.

F1 needs to be about the world's best drivers, ones who have proved themselves in lower formulas. But increasing financial pressures mean they need backing to secure a seat. Wehrlein and Ocon have that from Mercedes, but others need it from sponsors. Palmer had to find a package of around £6 million.

Even for those on the periphery of F1, experience in a grand prix car is confined largely to the simulator with, for the lucky ones, a relatively small amount of track time. That young, talented drivers who win significant junior titles often do not have the chance to prove themselves, let alone with a team they hope to drive for, is a serious concern.

Gone are the days of separate test teams pounding round a track several days a week, every week, trying hundreds and hundreds of parts. That provided the perfect opportunity to test out young drivers – Williams even ran a shootout test to decide whether to promote Jenson Button or Bruno Junqueira in 2000.

Testing restrictions mean those shootouts are almost impossible now. Teams have just 12 days per season in which to test. Of those, eight take place pre-season and are focused on the race drivers. Four days, split into a pair of two-day in-season tests, are all that remain. At least two of those days are dedicated to 'young' drivers, defined as a driver who has competed in no more than two grands prix – with no age restrictions. It's something, but it's not enough.

How can a driver expect to get up to speed and impress in so little time? How can a team learn enough about them to be sure they are worth promoting over a proven old hand?

Even those who get what counts for a lot of track time today are limited. Palmer had a relatively luxurious four days of testing and 13 Friday practice sessions last year. That's a total of 1934 miles, which is an unusually large amount, but his F1 Friday runs were during the opening session of the weekend

when the track was at its greenest. He was also limited to two sets of tyres per session and could not lay it on the line for fear of damaging the car and compromising the race driver's weekend. Hardly ideal circumstances. No wonder Renault's Alan Permane wants to see more aggression from Palmer, who he described as "possibly cautious".

The simple solution is to allow more testing. But that will lead to increasing costs yet more. So if dramatically increasing track time is not the answer, a way must be found to incentivise teams giving mileage to young drivers.

In IndyCar, teams are allowed an extra day of testing if it is divided between a regular driver and a driver competing in the Indy Lights feeder series. That plan could be adapted for F1.

Or perhaps there could be a third-driver session on grand prix weekends... Using a handicap system to adjust the lap times, whichever driver sets the fastest time earns their team an extra set of tyres for each of its drivers to use. Even if that prize is only for the afternoon's session, it would make a difference and be worth fighting for.

In the second segment, drivers could compete in a knockout competition. They would head out on track at the same time with enough fuel for 11 consecutive quick laps. At the end of each lap, the slowest driver would be black-flagged and return to

the pits. The process would continue until one driver is left.

Points could be awarded for a separate championship based on that, with ballast added for the following race weekend to allow for a fairer fight across the season. The rookies would gain experience and be able to sharpen their skills in front of 11 prospective employers. The session could take place on a Thursday, separate from the main grand prix weekend. That would add an extra element to the show to help promoters sell tickets, while providing fans better value for money.

An alternative is to allow each team to run a young driver in a third car during Friday practice. The extra chassis would add to costs, but it would mean that teams could gather more data without fear of pushing an engine too hard because it would only run on Friday and not count for the championship.

F1's bosses must add this subject to the agenda of the next Strategy Group and F1 Commission meetings because this is a serious problem that has been ignored for too long.

If not solved soon, it threatens F1's position as the pinnacle of motorsport. At least the subject will provide welcome relief from the endless chat about the 2017 regulations. ✎

“Experience in an F1 car is confined largely to the simulator”




A man wearing a blue beanie and a red and blue plaid shirt is using a long black pole to clear a path in a forest. He is standing on a pile of moss and branches. In the background, a rally car is visible on a dirt road, and other people are watching. The forest is dense with tall trees.

Ogier rides luck in Swedish slush

A lack of snow on the eve of Rally Sweden threatened disaster for the event, but Sebastien Ogier and the rally organisers survived their moments to win through

By David Evans, Rallies Editor

 @davidevansrally

RYAN TURECK
Photo by: Forest Wang



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Descending through the cloud cover into Stockholm, reality bites. It's like rain on your wedding day. It's green, not white. Not even a bit white. For 24 hours, counsel had been courted. Overwhelming feeling? Stay at home. It won't happen. It's the good advice that you just didn't take.

In the days before Rally Sweden, half-empty glasses of Chardonnay littered Karlstad bars. Black flies abounded. Ironic.

There was enough irony here for even Alanis Morissette to get a grasp of the word's meaning: Pirelli's announcement of an all-new Sottozero ice tyre, just as the last frozen fragment of central Sweden melted; Karlstad's own symbol of a smiling sun, reflecting its statistical standing as one of the country's sunniest places; the word 'Varmland' on the doors of every rally car — Varmland is the region this festival of supposed snow and ice runs in, and the translation's not complicated: 'Warmland'; spring springing just as the World Rally Championship arrived for its winter round. A little too ironic.

The organisers had worried for a week. Eight nights before the WRC landed, this

part of Scandinavia had been in the grip of a deep, deep freeze. Minus 30C and snowfall measured in feet, not inches, had answered their annual prayers. A day later it warmed up. Then it warmed up again. It wouldn't stop getting warmer.

The snow slipped away, taking with it the perfect, pure-white canvas on which this year's production was supposed to be painted. Sweden became Wales; white woods turned to deep, evergreen forests.

The roads? They turned to mud and mush. The first of many rally-week meetings slashed eight stages from the itinerary, but the organisers came under pressure to knock the thing on its head. The drivers splashed their way through the recce to warn of what they felt was a very real and present safety implication.

And when they felt they weren't being listened to, the drivers and co-drivers assembled themselves in a chilly multi-story car park in the centre of Karlstad at six o'clock last Friday morning. The plan was simple: skip the first stage, go straight to the next one. All agreed? All agreed. What's that, Hayden Paddon? You're going into the first stage. Er...

Ready for the real irony? Forced to concede the Thursday-night spectator-pleaser around Karlstad's trotting track, the organisers were determined to keep some element of winter in the opening ceremony. Somebody was sent out to source truckloads of snow for the

Ogier led from start to finish but admitted taking risks that could have ended his rally

planned snowmobile display. It worked: the snowmobiles flew... and 12 hours later it was wall-to-wall snow. Winter had come back.

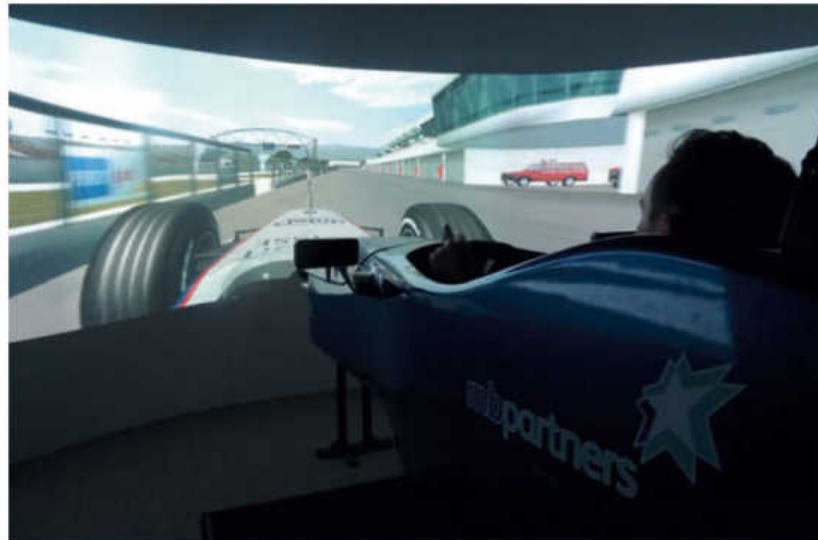
The stage most of the manufacturer drivers were determined to skip, Torsby, provided a solid ice base after countless volunteers pulled an all-nighter to provide their heroes with a stage suitable for them to perform on. As everyone struggled to stand on inch-deep ice as the 10-mile stage finished, the wind picked up and a blizzard blew in. Sweden aped Siberia. Ironically, we had a rally on.

There was nothing predictable about last week. Actually, that's not quite true, because for 12 years now predictability in the WRC has come via one word: Sebastien. Predictably, a French Seb was the master of what, for a while, looked to be a total disaster.

Well watered, winter was left to work on Torsby. The result? A solid ice island between grassy banks. The lack of snow opened the drivers' eyes to just how fast this rally could be. For the first time in years they could see into ditches, slide wide in confidence, knowing for sure there was no stone waiting for them. Burying anything beneath a snowbank is impossible without snow...

Fastest by three tenths of a second from his team-mate Andreas Mikkelsen, Ogier was on a mission as he headed for the border and his team-mate's backyard. »

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It's no exaggeration to say that Norway was something of a saviour for Rally Sweden this year, running at a higher latitude, not to mention four times the altitude. Admittedly, 450 metres is nothing compared with the French Alps of the Monte Carlo or the 2500-metre-plus Sierras awaiting us in Mexico next month, but it was better than being 100 metres above Swedish sea level.

Between them, Rojden and Svullrya provided 53 miles of good ice and solid winter. Ahead of the rally, these were the only two stages Ogier said the organisers should run.

From the moment the recce was put back a day, clerk of the course Stig Rune Kjærnsli was making it up as he went along. As Khalid Al-Qassimi's co-driver Chris Patterson put it: "You wouldn't want to play poker with this man."

Kjærnsli and rally CEO Glen Olsson put everything on the line to a backdrop of disharmony and disquiet. They gambled on the weather, faced down the dissenters and narrowly avoided financial oblivion while creating a brilliant rally on the hoof.

Having turned Torsby around and enjoyed Norway, a weekend on more southerly stages in Sweden came into view. Continued snow completed the winter white scene and created a captivating Saturday.

Ogier was never headed through day one, but he was riding his luck. He rattled the Polo into the trees, aquaplaning off the road in a high-speed right-hander in Svullrya. Having ploughed plenty of snow and won last year's event, he was more than up to the task this time around.

A close battle for second was led by Paddon, seven places further back on the road. "He will have a big advantage if it keeps on snowing," warned Ogier as the cars arrived back in Karlstad at the end of a cross-border day.

"I need all the help I can get," countered the Kiwi, running a new-generation i20 for the first time.

A stage win on the day-closing return to Torsby had helped build Paddon's



confidence. Seeing more snow falling into the night would help even more, even if snow expert and third-placed man Mads Ostberg might have spoiled all the fun.

"We have seen how much it hurts to be first on the road if it snows on the Swedish," said the chirpy Norwegian. "And, for sure, Ogier will find it hard tomorrow, but it's not as bad as if the snow had been falling on ice – then he would *really* struggle; the snow slips on the ice below. Tomorrow, the ground beneath the snow won't be frozen – the snow will insulate it – and he will be able to dig down and get some grip from the gravel."

Only the Vargasen stage was run twice on day two (this had plenty to do with the mass of corporate hospitality

centred on Colin's Crest). Return trips to Fredriksberg and Rammen were canned in fear of the astronomical bills to put right what would be deeply ploughed public roads.

Fredriksberg was first up. Ogier pushed, while Mikkelsen laughed at the marks his team leader had left.

"He is everywhere," said Mikkelsen. "He is going so quick, so hard. The lines are going to the ditch, everything. He's pushing like hell..."

Five second quicker than Paddon, Ogier's lead was up to 32.4s.

This was classic Ogier territory. Every now and then the Gap driver takes everything up a level. It's what champions do. Last Saturday was that day.

Vargasen was Ogier's nightmare and nemesis. The day's most westerly stage was full of snow and his Polo would double as a high-speed shovel for the cars following.

Just under four miles into the stage, Paddon was 5.9s up. At the next split, at almost 10 miles, 15.7s had headed in the New Zealander's favour. And by the end of the stage, a margin of 23.6s after 15.34 miles meant that Ogier had lost a second every 1000 metres. That was almost unheard of.

He was completely calm. He didn't get stropy, he didn't shout or curse the running order. He simply said his piece, admitted he might lose a lot to Paddon, pulled his cans on, flicked the Volkswagen into first and headed to the other side of Hagfors for Rammen.

He then politely ignored much of the service park as it plotted his downfall in the next snow-filled test. And, the way >>



Above: Paddon was pushing Ogier on the snow until the Rammen stage, but there was drama on the final stage when he hit a wooden post and damaged the radiator (left)



NO BUSINESS LIKE SNOW BUSINESS

HAD I NOT WATCHED 'EVEREST' A COUPLE of nights before leaving for Sweden, I'd have been tempted to complain at the end of the Torsby stage last Friday.

It wasn't cold. I know what cold is. This wasn't that. But it wasn't half a bit chilly. Recording Jari-Matti Latvala's recollection of a broken driveshaft in my notepad was painful for the pair of us.

Admittedly, the stage did end on an airfield, across which the wind was ripping right into us after an apparently uninterrupted run from the Urals. And then the snow came.

Just as the smart, if strangely dressed lady on the Swedish equivalent of BBC Breakfast had said it would, winter had come back.

Swedish rally fans have no idea how much they have to thank that cold front for. Without it, Rally Sweden would have sunk into a £1.5 million hole, from which it would never have emerged. It was that close. No wonder Rally CEO Glen Olsson had a slightly haunted look about him.

It had been one of those weeks.

"The Sunday before the rally," Olsson told me, "I didn't even want to get out of bed in the morning. The gut feeling was really bad this time. It was pouring with rain and six degrees. I couldn't see how this was going to happen. Then, around 1030 that morning we got the first forecast showing it going cold.

"We had to make it work."

There was no option. The collected Swedish shoulder was put to the wheel and, weather permitting, the rally came right.

Early on Sunday morning, looking across the harbour, the sun beamed down on service. It was minus eight. Perfect. What a difference a week makes: 14 degrees and a couple of million euros.

And to do that in the face of a possible drivers' strike was even more admirable.

DAVID EVANS



it was still falling, it had to be more of the same. Didn't it?

Paddon had heard the same. "It sounds like there's a fair bit of snow in the next one," he said. "I'm looking forward to the next stage — it's one of my favourites. We've got this advantage and we need to use it."

A similar speed in the 14-mile Rammén stage would theoretically provide Paddon with a roughly 14-second lead over Ogier. Vargasen the second time through would offer nothing like the same reward as in the morning, but the odds still favoured the Hyundai man to tickle a little bit more out of the day.

And, with the cancellation of the Lesjofors stage on Sunday leaving just a 10-mile powerstage to finish off, everything looked to be falling into place for Paddon.

With fresh Michelins beneath him, Paddon looked good as he headed out for a very big Saturday afternoon. But not far off the line into Rammén, the Hyundai man knew the game was up. This wasn't going to be his day.

"I knew it wasn't going to work," he sighed later. "There just wasn't anything like the snow in there. I was sure there would be more, but the conditions just weren't there. And, let's be honest, we needed the conditions — we were never going to beat him on speed alone."

If it was speed you were after, Ogier was the man. He ripped through Rammén, 1.4s faster than his rival. "I was completely flat-out!" said Ogier. "It was fun."

The gap sat at a fraction over 10 seconds. Next: Vargasen again, and Ogier's moment — and it was a very big

one. On the limiter in top, coming towards a toweringly quick right over a small crest, the Julien Ingrassia call was for a feather-like lift. Ogier did as he was told, but, on the way into the corner, the rear of the car became unsettled.

At 120mph, the Polo's left-rear dived into the trees. It took Ogier two handfuls of lock to pull it back. The crew-facing onboard showed a wide-eyed Ingrassia look up briefly from his notes. Ogier blinked, his brain still trying to compute what just happened. Instinctively, neither missed a beat.

"That was a close one," Ogier admitted at the finish, buzzing like a man who has just walked out of a police station carrying a smoking gun. "We were over the limit in that corner. I think I had my lucky star with me today. That moment was almost the end, and that's not the place you want to end. It would have been 200km/h directly to the trees. I get this problem sometimes on the second loop of stages, the line is a little bit disturbed in the corner and the rear gets loose. I have to say, this one was quite scary. I kept it on the road, but, for sure, there was some luck this time."

That moment gained him time, another five seconds. And with just a superspecial (admittedly a muddy and very tricky one at that) in Karlstad and Varmullsasen to come, Ogier was looking good. Sure enough, there was no sign of the ball being dropped.

"It's nice to make the perfect start for the first time in my career," he said. The win, however, had been made on his own super Saturday.

"In terms of pure speed, with the



Neuville struggled after a broken rear differential on day one

conditions I have, that was one of the best of my life," he said. "I never had so many moments in one day of rallying."

Ogier took his extra gear in Sweden last week and nobody could live with him. If there is any consolation for the chasing pack, it comes from the fact that an on-the-limit Ogier was forced to ride his luck. Paddon and his pals have seen that, if they can keep the pressure on, they could force a mistake.

But, for now, the monkey stays on Paddon's back.

Ostberg won his race with Mikkelsen to be top Norwegian home in third, while Ott Tanak turned in a great drive to fifth, bagging tyre supplier DMACK its best ever result in the snow.

Dani Sordo was sixth and could potentially have been more of a threat without a puncture. Henning Solberg made a welcome and entertaining return in seventh, one place ahead of Craig Breen, who made eighth on his Citroën debut, upholding the honour of the French firm after an errant rock robbed a second-placed-running Kris Meeke of a shot at the win for the second rally in succession. The Northern Irishman deserved more. His fellow Brit Elfyn Evans got everything he deserved after a second-successive WRC2-winning drive in M-Sport's Fiesta R5.

But in terms of that event and this report, there's only one way to end it: with the news that Rally Sweden has pulled a three-year deal to remain in the World Rally Championship from the jaws of absolute despair.

You've got it: it's a death-row pardon, but this time it's not too late. 🍀

RESULTS ROUND 2/14, RALLY SWEDEN, KARLSTAD (S), FEBRUARY 11-14

POS	DRIVER	CO-DRIVER	TEAM	TIME
1	Sebastien Ogier (F)	Julien Ingrassia (F)	Volkswagen Motorsport Volkswagen Polo R WRC	1h59m47.4s
2	Hayden Paddon (NZ)	John Kennard (NZ)	Hyundai Motorsport Hyundai i20 WRC	+29.8s
3	Mads Ostberg (N)	Ola Floene (N)	M-Sport WRT Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+55.6s
4	Andreas Mikkelsen (N)	Anders Jæger Synnevaag (N)	Volkswagen Motorsport II Volkswagen Polo R WRC	+1m10.8s
5	Ott Tanak (EST)	Raigo Molder (EST)	DMACK World Rally Team Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+1m50.7s
6	Dani Sordo (E)	Marc Martí (E)	Hyundai Motorsport N Hyundai i20 WRC	+2m24.0s
7	Henning Solberg (N)	Ilka Minor-Petrasko (A)	Adapta Motorsport Ford Fiesta RS WRC	+2m40.0s
8	Craig Breen (IRL)	Scott Martin (GB)	Abu Dhabi Total WRT Citroen DS3 WRC	+2m44.6s
9	Elfyn Evans (GB)	Craig Parry (GB)	M-Sport WRT Ford Fiesta R5	+5m17.0s
10	Teemu Suninen (FIN)	Mikko Markkula (FIN)	Team ORECA Skoda Fabia R5	+5m31.6s
OTHERS				
14	Thierry Neuville (B)	Nicolas Gilsoul (B)	Hyundai Motorsport Hyundai i20 WRC	+7m10.7s
19	Khalid Al-Qassimi (UAE)	Chris Patterson (GB)	Abu Dhabi Total WRT Citroen DS3 WRC	+9m48.1s
23	Kris Meeke (GB)	Paul Nagle (IRL)	Abu Dhabi Total WRT Citroen DS3 WRC	+13m56.8s
24	Valeriy Gorbunov (UA)	Volodymyr Korsya (UA)	Eurolamp WRT Mini John Cooper Works WRC	+14m14.5s
26	Jari-Matti Latvala (FIN)	Miikka Anttila (FIN)	Volkswagen Motorsport Volkswagen Polo R WRC	+16m58.0s
34	Mait Maarend (EST)	Mihkel Kapp (EST)	Eurolamp WRT Mini John Cooper Works WRC	+38m10.3s
R	Yazeed Al-Rajhi (SA)	Michael Orr (GB)	Yazeed Racing Ford Fiesta RS WRC	SS16-accident
R	Eric Camilli (F)	Nicolas Klinger (F)	M-Sport WRT Ford Fiesta RS WRC	SS10-accident
R	Lorenzo Bertelli (I)	Simone Scattolin (I)	FWRT Ford Fiesta RS WRC	SS9-withdrew

DRIVERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Ogier, 56; **2** Mikkelsen, 33; **3** Ostberg, 27; **4** Paddon, 18; **5** Sordo, 18; **6** Tanak, 16; **7** Neuville, 15; **8** Lefebvre, 10; **9** Evans, 6; **10** Solberg, 6.

MANUFACTURERS' CHAMPIONSHIP

1 Volkswagen Motorsport, 54; **2** Hyundai Motorsport, 49; **3** Volkswagen Motorsport II, 30; **4** M-Sport WRT, 27; **5** DMACK World Rally Team, 18; **6** Hyundai Motorsport N, 14.



Tanak delivered an impressive drive to fifth

STAGE TIMES

STAGE	FASTEST	LEADER	SECOND
SS1 SSS Karlstad 1 1.18 miles	Cancelled	Ogier	Meeke +4.1s
SS2 Torsby 1 9.94 miles	Ogier 8m53.0s	Ogier	Mikkelsen +0.3s
SS3 Rojden 1 [Sweden-Norway] 11.50 miles	Ogier 9m32.3s	Ogier	Mikkelsen +6.9s
SS4 Svullrya 1 [Norway] 15.69 miles	Ogier 12m47.9s	Ogier	Mikkelsen +24.2s
SS5 Kirkenær 1 [Norway] 4.39 miles	Cancelled	Ogier	Meeke +1.5s
SS6 Kirkenær 2 [Norway] 4.39 miles	Cancelled	Ogier	Meeke +5.0s
SS7 Svullrya 2 [Norway] 15.69 miles	Meeke 12m44.2s	Ogier	Meeke +21.0s
SS8 Rojden 2 [Sweden-Norway] 11.50 miles	Paddon 9m52.8s	Ogier	Paddon +30.9s
SS9 Torsby 2 9.94 miles	Paddon 8m56.6s	Ogier	Paddon +26.9s
SS10 Fredriksberg 1 11.28 miles	Ogier 9m43.4s	Ogier	Paddon +32.4s
SS11 Rammen 1 14.14 miles	Cancelled	Ogier	Meeke +26.8s
SS12 Vargasen 1 15.30 miles	Latvala 12m56.7s	Ogier	Paddon +8.8s
SS13 Fredriksberg 2 11.28 miles	Cancelled	Ogier	Mikkelsen +1m59.7s
SS14 Rammen 2 14.14 miles	Latvala 11m03.2s	Ogier	Paddon +10.2s
SS15 Hagfors Sprint 1.16 miles	Cancelled	Ogier	Mikkelsen +1m48.6s
SS16 Vargasen 2 15.30 miles	Ogier 12m48.8s	Ogier	Paddon +15.9s
SS17 SSS Karlstad 2 1.18 miles	Latvala 1m34.9s	Ogier	Paddon +17.1s
SS18 Lesjofors 1 9.32 miles	Cancelled	Ogier	Mikkelsen +1m54.5s
SS19 Varmullsasen 1 9.86 miles	Cancelled	Ogier	Mikkelsen +1m48.6s
SS20 Lesjofors 2 9.32 miles	Cancelled	Ogier	Mikkelsen +1m54.5s
SS21 Varmullsasen 2 [Power Stage] 9.86 miles	Ogier 7m42.7s	Ogier	Paddon +29.8s



THE MASTER RACER

THE AMAZING STORY OF THE NAZIS' RELUCTANT HERO

STARRING BERND ROSEMEYER ELLY BEINHORN
WITH TAZIO NUVOLARI RUDOLF CARACCIOLA ERNST VON DELIUS AND ADOLF HITLER

THE GREATEST RACING MOVIE NEVER MADE

Hollywood has produced some great racing cinema over the years, but the story of Bernd Rosemeyer's amazing 1936 season is crying out to be told. Here's why

By Paul Fearnley

SCENE 1

Eifelrennen, Nurburgring, June 14 1936. A soaring Wagnerian engine note rises in a Stygian gloom. The crowd cranes as one. Then stands as Bernd Rosemeyer's 'Silver Arrow' arcs into view: an otherworldly talent at incredible speed in an alien machine. The Twilight of the Gods.

Stopwatches click: "11:33!" Pause. "Nuvolari: 12:15." Auto Union chief mechanic Ludwig Sebastian shrugs. His charge is impetuous but brilliant. He can smell the road, apparently. Two laps to go, praise be!

BACKSTORY

Rosemeyer's campaign had a stuttering start. Having missed Spring Training at Monza due to sickness, allegedly contracted from an oyster, and an ankle broken skiing, he crashed in Monaco while recovering from a pitstop to cure a sticky throttle, and retired because of fires in Tripoli and Tunis. He escaped unharmed, but then hurt his knee and nose knocking down a lamppost in practice for Barcelona's Penya Rhin Grand Prix; hampered, he finished fifth behind Tazio Nuvolari's victorious Alfa Romeo.

The important events were still to come. As Auto Union's erstwhile team leader Achille Varzi continued a descent into morphine addiction, 26-year-old Rosemeyer plunged into the fog and emerged a hero.

SCENE 2

Eifelrennen, Nurburgring, June 14 1936. Rosemeyer descends the narrow steps from the podium. Nuvolari, in leather jerkin, helmet and draped raincoat, claps him on the shoulder and grins between swigs from a flask; he sees much of his younger self in Rosemeyer: a biker's balance and a willingness to take risks.

SCENE 3

Gestapo Headquarters, Prinz-Albrecht-Strasse, Berlin, July 1936. Reichsfuhrer-SS Heinrich Himmler commands Rosemeyer's promotion to obersturmfuhrer (akin to first lieutenant).

BACKSTORY

German racers had to enlist with the Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrkorps (NSKK), the paramilitary motoring corps. Several were awarded honorary military rank: Rudi Caracciola was a squadron leader. His Swiss residency, however, was a black mark. His Mercedes-Benz team-mates – Manfred von Brauchitsch and Hermann Lang, an ex-mechanic – were deemed too blue-blooded and blue-collar respectively; and Auto Union's Hans Stuck was blackballed because of wife Paula's Jewish ancestry.

No, Rosemeyer was the handsome – now that his monobrow had been tamed – blue-eyed blond of the Schutzstaffel. Though its endorsement and influence were undoubtedly advantageous to a racer keen to quickly further his career, it was an awkward position for an independent, often rebellious son of a cosmopolitan, middle-class Catholic family from Ling, close to the Dutch border.

SCENE 4

St Hedwig Hospital, Grosse Hamburger Strasse, Berlin, New Year's Eve, 1935. A badly jaundiced Rosemeyer receives a telegram from his girlfriend: "May every wish come true in 1936."

BACKSTORY

Rosemeyer was a tearaway winning grasstrack races on his 250cc Zundapp when aviatrix Elly Beinhorn, already notorious for a forced landing in the Sahara and her rescue by Tuareg, became world famous as the second woman to fly solo from Europe to Australia. She completed her circumnavigation on July 26 1932.

A VIP guest of Auto Union, she met her future husband in September 1935, at Brno, Czechoslovakia, after Rosemeyer's maiden grand prix victory. The elder by more than two years, she was unimpressed by his schoolboy charm but eventually won over/worn down by the schoolboy subtlety and vigour of his pursuit.

SCENE 5

Bad Mergentheim, Bavaria, July 1936. Rosemeyer's convalescence at a spa resort – he suffered an illness relapse while finishing second to Nuvolari at Budapest's Hungarian GP – is interrupted by another telegram from Elly. This is less cheery: "I would prefer to be married illegally than not at all."

BACKSTORY

Rosemeyer had neglected to obtain permission to marry from the SS. He completed the necessary form and 'confirmed' his membership stretched back to 1932. A separate personnel file lists his promotions of 1934: rottenfuhrer (akin to corporal), on September 16; and unterscharfuhrer on November 16. During his bike career, he competed in the brown shirt of the SA, the Sturmabteilung Nazi paramilitary wing that controlled the NSKK – until a bloody purge in summer 1934 – and wearing a Swastika armband.

SCENE 6

Schmargendorf Registry Office, a south-west Berlin suburb, July 13 1936. The Rosemeyers – both of whom consider 13 to be a lucky number – are cheered by a guard of honour of mechanics from Auto Union and Shell. The ceremony is calm due to a late change of venue. The crowd at Berliner Strasse is disappointed: Germany's 'Posh and Becks' are big news.

BACKSTORY

As the honours became increasingly difficult to turn down, Rosemeyer's burgeoning fame and popularity allowed him to hide in plain sight. To his superiors' chagrin, he shunned starchy uniform with peaked cap, complete with Imperial Eagle and skull-and-crossbones, in favour of smart suit and (often) Tyrolean felt hat, complete with feather. The Nazi message was loud and clear. Rosemeyer's response was tacitly subtle bar a repeated threat to refuse his commission rather than renounce religion.

SCENE 7

German Grand Prix, Nurburgring, July 26 1936. "How's this for an extra wedding present?" Frau Rosemeyer is torn between embarrassment and elation at her husband's show of affection after his great victory. Later, at the Sport Hotel, Rosemeyer's first thought is for his mechanics: "They are the heart and soul of the game. I'm going to crack a bottle with them. Coming?"

BACKSTORY

Auto Union had much to celebrate. Not only had it won the year's most important race by nearly four minutes but also all four of its C-types finished in the top six. Advantages of power and torque – its V16 had by increments achieved the 6-litre capacity and 520bhp output that Professor Ferdinand Porsche schemed for it in 1933 – and also traction, courtesy of a Porsche-commissioned ZF limited-slip differential, were rammed home by better strategies and slicker pit work. This upstart combination born of financial pressure had unified to profit from its diversity. Its fresh thinking and joie de vivre was giving its longer established and better funded, rigidly disciplined rival pause for thought.

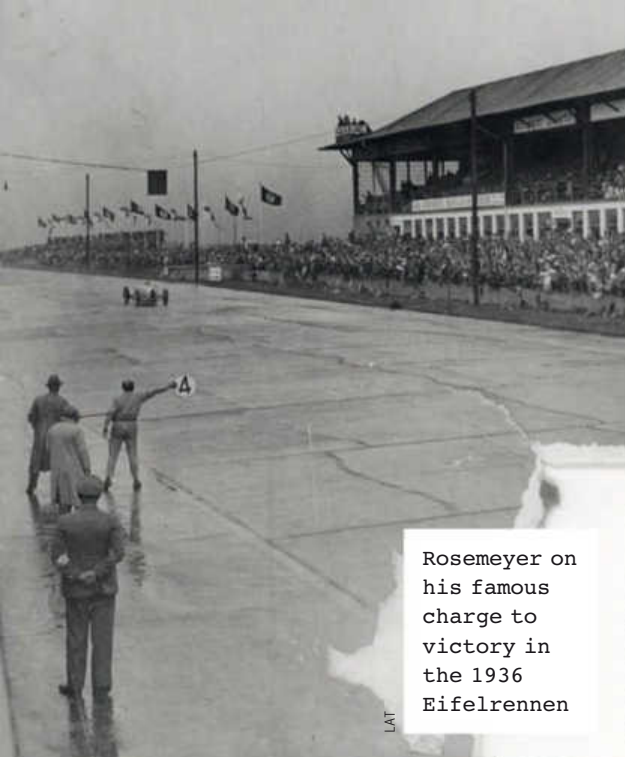
Mercedes-Benz was not a happy ship. Plans to use a 5.6-litre V12 had to be ditched when it proved heavier than expected – by which time 10 inches had been chopped from the wheelbase of the successful W25B model of 1935. In combination with an old straight-eight stretched too far, the lowline W25K ('Kurz,' short) looked sensational but was a mongrel, unreliable and wilful. Drivers hated its balance and handling: lanky von Brauchitsch didn't fit it and lost heart; tempestuous Luigi Fagioli pitted at the 'Ring after being lapped by Rosemeyer to vent his frustration; and suave Louis Chiron crashed and would miss the rest of the season. Only Lang seemed happy – until he broke a finger changing gear when in second place.

SCENE 8

Daimler-Benz Boardroom, Unterturkheim, Stuttgart, August 1936. Acting chairman Dr Wilhelm Kissel, another 'graced' by the SS, charges an experimental engineer from its production side with reviving the company's racing fortunes. London-born Rudolf Uhlenhaut, just turned 30, and with no experience of motorsport, is to create and run an R&D department to provide a link between the design office and Alfred Neubauer's race team. He's not the first to be asked but he is the first to accept.

BACKSTORY

Uhlenhaut discovered a workshop run by committee – chief designer Hans Nibel had died of a heart attack in November 1934 – and paralysed by constitutional caution. Multi-talented, he taught himself to drive its GP car at realistic speeds and discovered a frame too soft and suspension too stiff. As it had after its 1935 German GP defeat by Nuvolari's outdated Alfa Romeo, Mercedes-Benz made a tactical withdrawal.



Rosemeyer on his famous charge to victory in the 1936 Eifelrennen

LAT



CORPORATE ARCHIVES OF AUDI AG

Achille Varzi (left), Hans Stuck (centre) and Rosemeyer - Auto Union's stars



Rosemeyer with aviator wife Elly Beinhorn

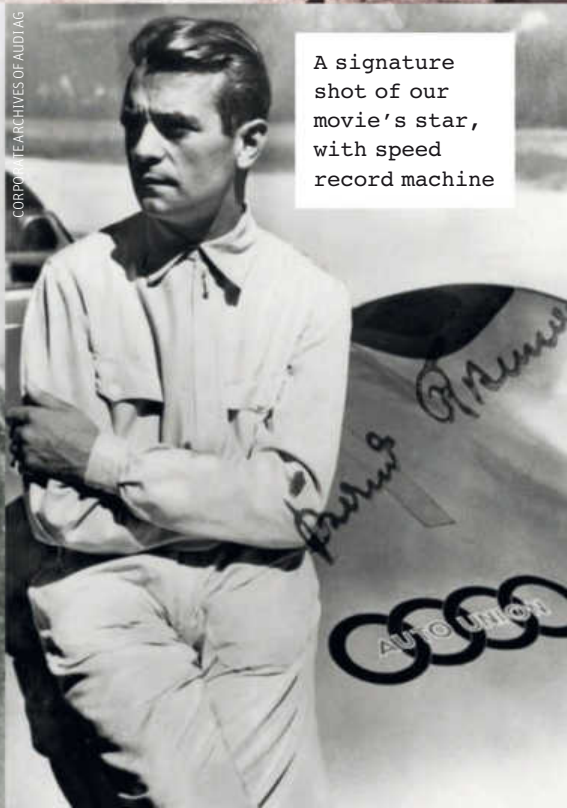


CORPORATE ARCHIVES OF AUDI AG

Rosemeyer in action on his way to winning the Coppa Acerbo at Pescara in 1936



Adolf Hitler greets Rosemeyer, who was used by the Nazi propaganda machine



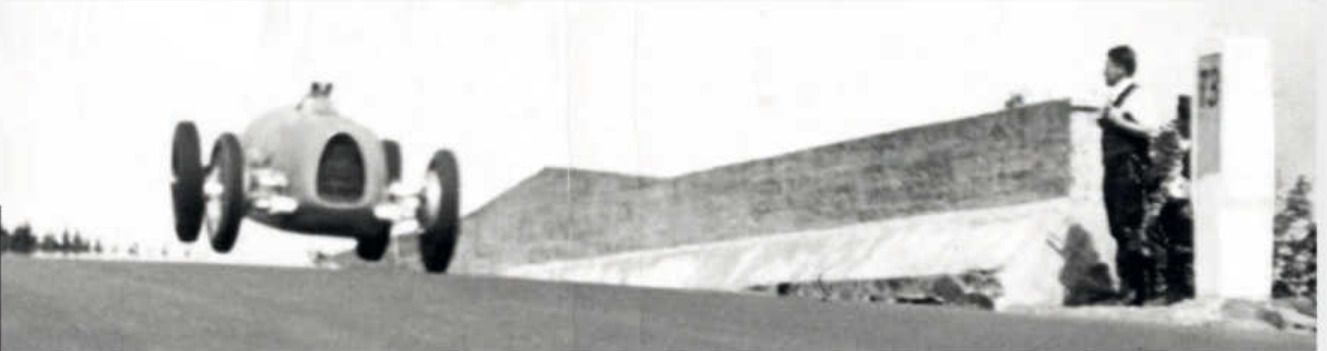
CORPORATE ARCHIVES OF AUDI AG

A signature shot of our movie's star, with speed record machine

ROSEMEYER'S 1936 WINS

LAT

Eifelrennen Nurburgring (June 14)
Caracciola leads for two laps before dropping back with failing suspension. Rosemeyer passes Nuvolari for first place before the fog descends; he's more than 40 seconds per lap faster when it does.



German GP Nurburgring (July 26)
Von Brauchitsch leads until he suffers a brake problem on lap two. Rosemeyer, from the third row, hits the front. One of the few on a two-stopper, he breaks the 10-minute barrier and wins by almost four minutes.

Coppa Acerbo Pescara (August 15)
In Mercedes-Benz's absence, Rosemeyer is patient before passing Nuvolari on lap five. Nuvolari responds. Briefly. Able to complete 257 miles in oppressive heat with just one stop, Rosemeyer wins by more than six minutes.



Swiss GP Bremgarten (August 23)
Caracciola leads on Mercedes-Benz's return. An irritated Rosemeyer is clearly faster and, once in the lead, continues at record pace. Backed by superb pit work, he heads a second consecutive Auto Union 1-2-3 ahead of Varzi and Stuck. The Hermann Lang/Luigi Fagioli-driven example was the only one of the four Mercedes-Benz entries to finish in fourth place, after losing time with a puncture.

CORPORATE ARCHIVES OF AUDI AG



Freiburg (August 30)
Rosemeyer wins the German Mountain Championship on his debut in the hills. He's hampered by asphalt softening in the sun.

Feldberg (September 27)
Rosemeyer scores his second success in the mountains and sets a new course record despite miserable weather.

FELLOWES/LAT



Italian GP Monza (September 13)
Rosemeyer passes Stuck and Nuvolari on the same lap. Nuvolari is relentless in pursuit, but Rosemeyer has him covered and pulls away to score his third (from four) European Championship victory.

SCENE 9

Damascus military aerodrome, August 3 1936. Beinhorn is preparing for a flight over three continents when she receives a telegram: "Retired after six laps. Come home soon. You must never leave me again."

BACKSTORY

After badgering his wife to attempt the trip despite unfavourable weather reports – and on the unspoken understanding that she would 'retire' thereafter – a fretful Rosemeyer had handed his car to Stuck. That he did so with the team's blessing indicated his status within it. He chose a good moment to do so too. For once Auto Union was ill-prepared and brake problems left it powerless against an inspired Nuvolari.

Two days after completing her trip, Elly flew Bernd to Ancona in her Messerschmitt Taifun, where Ludwig Sebastian in Bernd's Horch coupe 'Manuela', repaired after its July collision with a tram, met them. A restored Rosemeyer played it cool in searing heat to win Pescara's Coppa Acerbo by more than six minutes. He went the distance on two sets of Continentals, whereas poleman Varzi, wrangled by Auto Union representatives from "some very odd coves" in Rome, made four stops for new rubber.

Mercedes-Benz, meanwhile, was testing at the Nurburgring, Caracciola, von Brauchitsch and Uhlenhaut assessing 48 modifications: weight distribution, strengthened de Dion rear suspension, spring rates and tyre pressures. W25K's roadholding and handling were improved, and Rosemeyer was anxious to discover by how much. He quarreled with Elly on the morning of the Swiss GP: "Don't talk of things you know nothing about!" Still seething after winning, he was fractious en route to the prize ceremony.

SCENE 10

A hotel elevator, Berne, August 23 1936. Rosemeyer bumps into Caracciola. Generations collide. Older, wiser Rudi tries to ease the tension: "Well, young man, you did well. May I add my congratulations?" But Rosemeyer is not appeased: "So you think I did well? Well, I would have done a lot better if you hadn't got in my way for so long. Racing is dangerous enough without having to take unnecessary risks, dammit!" The argument between Germany's two best continues after their embarrassed wives make their excuses.

BACKSTORY

Determined and undeniably defensive, Caracciola led for eight laps as Rosemeyer, clearly faster, waved his frustration, without entirely losing his patience. Their rivalry had simmered since the Mercedes-Benz number one scolded Auto Union's newcomer after the 1935 Eifelrennen: "Next time, use your head!" Rosemeyer, who had come within a mistimed gear change of winning at his second attempt, casually chewed the swizzle stick Caracciola gave him – and cheekily wore it on his lapel for months.

At Bremgarten, blue flags were waved and ignored – they were racing for position – but eventually the clerk of the course signalled his displeasure with Caracciola. Once in the lead, Rosemeyer pushed hard – even after his rival's retirement with a broken rear axle – and his fastest race lap was 3.4 seconds under Caracciola's pole. He'd made his point. So too had Auto Union, with a resounding 1-2-3-5.

SCENE 11

Monza, September 12 1936. Elly completes two laps in Auto Union's long-tailed training car.

BACKSTORY

Mercedes-Benz cowed into submission, the atmosphere prior to the Italian GP was relaxed, though the European Championship was still to be settled. The Rosemeyers drove rather than flew and, once Bernd had secured pole, Elly received an insight into her husband's world: "Oh, Bernd, if crawling along like this gives me so much pleasure, what must it be like for you when you're driving as fast as you know how?"

Rosemeyer's untainted genius was the final piece of Auto Union's puzzle. Placing the engine behind the driver but within the wheelbase had turned the sport on its head by reducing weight (via simplified drivetrain), frontal area and polar moment of inertia. Less drag, better acceleration and higher top speed were allied to improved manoeuvrability made more consistent by a centralised fuel load. The concept was fundamentally correct – but preconceptions as to how a GP car should look and behave threatened to constrain it. Rosemeyer carried no such baggage. According to chief engineer Professor Robert Eberan von Eberhorst, he hadn't the faintest ideas of the technicalities but used his supreme balance and reactions to anticipate and/or catch the layout's inherent tendency for sudden breakaway.

At Monza, he passed Stuck and Nuvolari on the fourth lap and controlled the race from the front; he knew there "was no point going hell-for-leather if Tazio gets on my tail" at a circuit punctuated by five chicanes to hinder the Germans. He prevailed by more than two minutes and was crowned European champion.

SCENE 12

Hotel room near Feldberg mountain, Hessen, September 27 1936. Rosemeyer is furious to discover team-mate Ernst von Delius was ahead on time before sliding into a ditch 9km into this hillclimb. "If you think you can take advantage of me by driving like a madman when I have promised to take it easy in the filthy weather you have chosen the wrong man... Now please leave us alone! I have no further need of your company."

BACKSTORY

Stuck's injurious crashes at chicanes at Pescara and Monza meant Rosemeyer replaced him as Auto Union's mountain man: a prestigious position. He won at Freiburg on August 30 – only 2.5 seconds ahead of von Delius – and was comfortably the quickest in practice at Feldberg. Bad weather, however, limited him to a new record just nine tenths faster than Stuck's previous mark.

The spat with his closest friend in the sport was resolved as quickly as it had flared when von Delius explained that he had used different gears than in practice and was surprised by the gains, though not by the accident it caused. Ameliorated, Rosemeyer had "decent liquor sent up" to toast an incredible year.

EPILOGUE – SCENE 1

Frankfurt-Darmstadt autobahn, January 28 1938. Mechanics push-start the streamlined Auto Union and it accelerates away around a curve and onto the record piste. It does not return.

BACKSTORY

Rosemeyer ended a difficult 1937 on several highs: he won the season's final GP, at Donington Park; he upstaged Mercedes-Benz by exceeding 400km/h on the autobahn during October's Rekordwoche; and he became a father, to Bernd Junior, on November 12. He had, though, lost his mother to a sudden illness, brother Jakob to a car crash, von Delius to a racing accident, and his European title to Caracciola.

Mercedes-Benz's response to its disastrous 1936 was the creation of the W125. Uhlenhaut followed Auto Union's lead by using an oval-tube rather than a box-section frame; he bucked company tradition by sucking rather than blowing air into the supercharger carburettor to provide a cooler, more efficient mix, and he set new standards by interposing coil springs between the front wishbones and relying purely on hydraulic shock absorbers. By combining increased suspension suppleness and travel with improved straightline stability, courtesy of a longer wheelbase and a reworked de Dion providing consistent wheel angles and contact patches, albeit at the cost of independence, he allowed the drivers to make better use of a new 5.6-litre straight-eight that generated more than 600bhp on increasingly potent fuel.

Auto Union could not match this outlay for a single season – its budget was reckoned to be half that of its rival's – and, but for Rosemeyer, would have been swamped. Although he didn't win a round of the European Championship, he was victorious at the Eifelrennen, Vanderbilt Cup in New York and Coppa Acerbo. Mobbed on his return from America, the SS promoted him to Hauptsturmführer (Captain).

He was now on good terms with Caracciola, but rebutted his offer of joining him at Mercedes-Benz. Rosemeyer felt an affinity for Auto Union and hoped to work for it after retiring (probably in 1940). So when Mercedes-Benz persuaded the authorities to allow it extra runs on the autobahn in January 1938, he felt obliged to respond – for the honour of Auto Union rather than Germany. Conditions were cold and gusty but he waved away with a grin Caracciola's urging for caution or, better yet, patience. Elly was on a lecture tour in Czechoslovakia and Professor Porsche, who treated Bernd like a second son, was no longer contracted to the firm. Headstrong Bernd probably wouldn't have listened to them either.

EPILOGUE – SCENE 2

Dahlem Cemetery, Berlin, February 1 1938. Rosemeyer is buried next to von Delius and with full military honours. NSKK Korpsführer Adolf Huhnlein begins a speech, but Elly, angry as well as grieving, stands to interrupt him. Shamed into silence, Huhnlein sits.

BACKSTORY

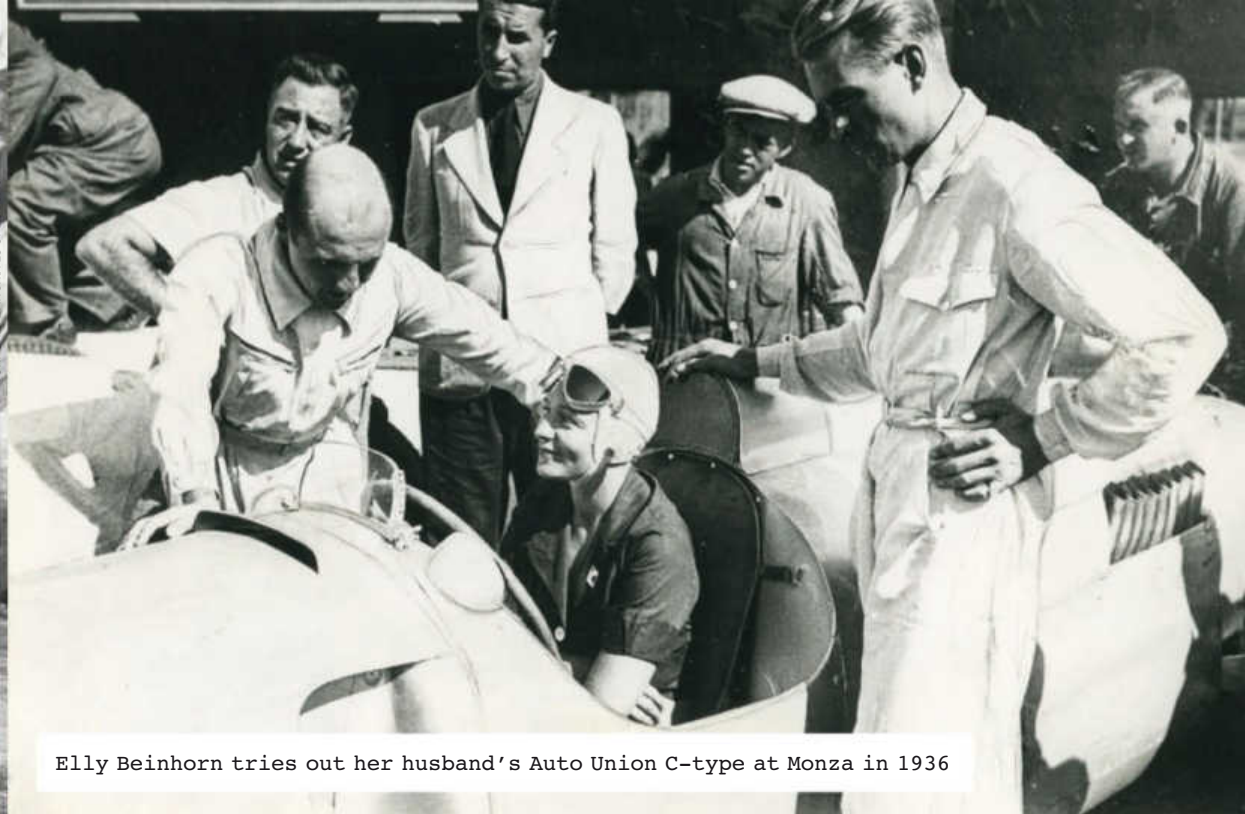
Huhnlein was a career Nazi, a plodding politician – "manure. Always around, unwanted," according to Elly – and a figure of fun, if not always to his face, among Germany's GP drivers. Rosemeyer's death went to the very top and the propaganda machine – newspapers, newsreels, radio – disseminated oratorical messages of condolence from Goebbels, Goering, Himmler and Hitler. Das Schwarze Korps, the free weekly newspaper of the SS, printed a portrait photo of Rosemeyer in a captain's uniform; it looks convincing, though it could have been faked. The only thing it proves is how he was perceived, and used to their ends, by his masters in the so-called master race. You can imagine him swooping over Kent in a Messerschmitt Bf109 – he'd earned his pilot's licence in 1937 – but that's speculation enough.



Bernd and Elly celebrate after victory at Pescara in 1937



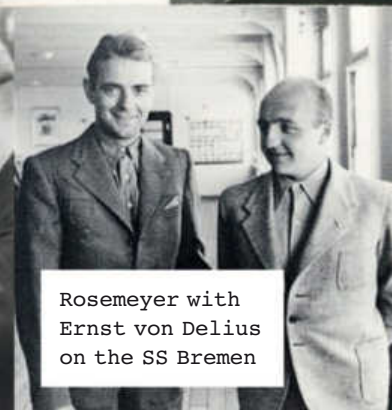
Uhlenhaut: driver/engineer revived Mercedes-Benz in 1937



Elly Beinhorn tries out her husband's Auto Union C-type at Monza in 1936



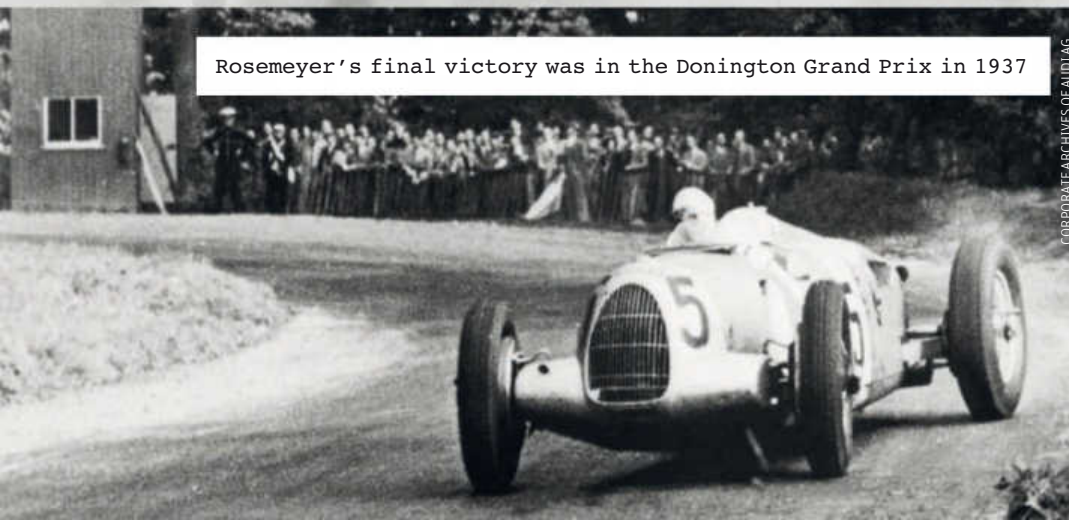
Rosemeyer's speed record exploits were a big part of his legend



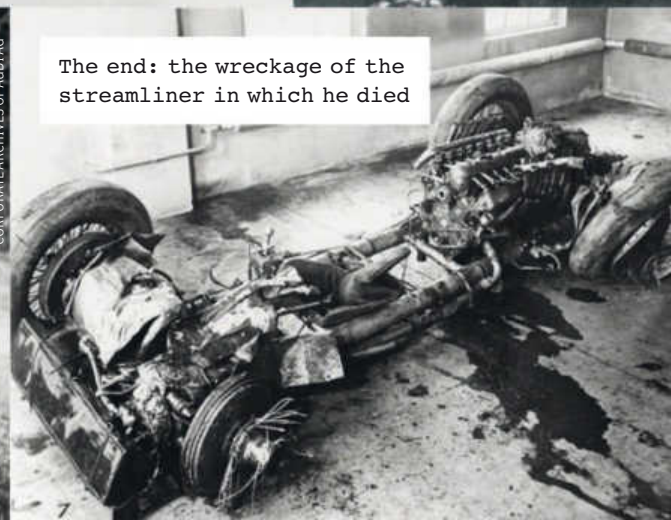
Rosemeyer with Ernst von Delius on the SS Bremen



Rosemeyer with Bernd Jr, just a few weeks before his death



Rosemeyer's final victory was in the Donington Grand Prix in 1937



The end: the wreckage of the streamliner in which he died

A Kiwi who has taken off

Nick Cassidy's career was on the rocks in late 2014. But now he's a Toyota driver in Japan and will line up with top F3 squad Prema in Europe. That's a lot of air miles and, he hopes, plenty of success

By Marcus Simmons, Deputy Editor

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November 2015: the Macau daylight is fading fast as *Autosport* leaves the paddock for the 20-minute walk back to the hotel. Up ahead is a young guy with a rucksack walking on his own: Nick Cassidy. Crowned one month earlier as Japanese Formula 3 champion, the New Zealander is back in the same city where his career took off one year ago, with a podium finish on just his sixth F3 race outing.

A few steps and we're level, and we chat as we walk along, following the line of the Avenida da Amizade, the Macau circuit's main drag opened once again to non-stop traffic. Before Macau 2014, when Cassidy was given his chance by small British team T-Sport and its technical/engine partner ThreeBond, his career had been pretty much spiralling down a lack-of-finance-enforced drain. But that sensational third position in Macau put him straight to the top of the wishlist of Japanese powerhouse TOM'S, and he rewarded the *de facto* works Toyota team with the 2015 title. Not only that, but a BMW Junior Team deal has him on the books of a second manufacturer, and more recently Prema Powerteam has called him up for a couple of cameo appearances in the F3 European Championship.

So now Cassidy is pondering a quandary he'd have been delighted to have 12 months earlier. He's looking forward to a debut Super Formula test in Japan and a likely chance of promotion by Toyota, but he has also, *Autosport* has learned, been offered a full-time Prema seat in Euro F3. Does he turn his back on Japan and risk throwing away what could be a long and rewarding professional career, or does he turn down Prema and, possibly, be forgotten by Europe forever?

Three months later, he's been announced by Toyota as a fully fledged member of the TOM'S Lexus line-up in Super GT, then, a few days after that, Prema confirmed that he will also help spearhead the Italian squad's Euro F3 attack. After years without a crumb, Nick Cassidy is having his cake and he's eating it.

"Europe is unfinished business for me," says Cassidy down a phone line from Auckland, 10,000 miles away from the continent to which he will return in early March for the first official pre-season F3 test at Vallelunga. Twice winner of New

"The first TRS title was great, but it made my expectations for myself too high in Europe"

Zealand's Toyota Racing Series in 2012 and '13 (and runner-up as a rookie to Mitch Evans in '11), his scalps on his home ground include Daniil Kvyat, Alex Lynn, Raffaele Marciello, Lucas Auer and Pipo Derani, yet remarkably Cassidy has never enjoyed a full season in Europe. Twice he began Formula Renault Eurocup seasons — with Fortec in 2012 and with Koiranen in '14 — but he finished neither. "I certainly wouldn't denigrate either team — both offered me great opportunities," he says. "It was tough though; we went into each season without funding and testing, and with Koiranen the deal only came together a week before the first race."

Cassidy says his first TRS title was a mixed blessing. "It was great in my development as a driver [to beat the international visitors]," he agrees, "and I learned a huge amount in this series. With success coming so early though, it made my expectations for myself maybe too high initially in Europe. I found out pretty quickly how tough it is."

With unconvincing results, Cassidy was relying on the faith of those around him to get anywhere. In those days, ex-Benetton/Williams F1 team manager Peter Collins was pushing hard, while his first outing with T-Sport came in a mid-season 2013 test after the team had split with Will Buller. Soon after >>

Cassidy will
race #36 Lexus



that came a surprise one-off F3 race debut at the Norisring with EuroInternational. Living in Milton Keynes, Cassidy was spending a lot of time with neighbours Kvyat and Antonio Felix da Costa “and I used to stay with Dany when Antonio was away” so, when Kvyat got promoted to F1 with Toro Rosso, Cassidy was given his Carlin F3 seat for what was effectively a Red Bull Junior audition at Hockenheim. “But I was sick all week and hardly able to eat – we were third in practice but had so much bad luck.” On the third row of the grid for the finale, he saved his new tyres for this one... and it rained.

Simultaneously, GP3 team Status Grand Prix was working on getting Cassidy on board for 2014, and he did the late-’13 post-season tests, only for compatriot Richie Stanaway to pip him to the post with at least some budget, sending Cassidy into the arms of Koiranen for FRenault. When that petered out, T-Sport renewed its association with him with a drive fully funded by ThreeBond to encompass Macau and the final two Euro F3 rounds. “Without a doubt I owe everything to what happened with T-Sport,” affirms Cassidy. “They’re a great team with a good car and it was brilliant working with Russell [Eacott, team principal] and ‘Skelly’ [tech director Alan Woodhead]. In terms of not only engineering, but also driver-coaching, they’re right up there with the best I’ve worked with.”

The Macau result propelled him to Japan, but Cassidy couldn’t take success there for granted. TOM’S team-mate Kenta Yamashita, who he rates highly, had only just lost out as a rookie in 2014 to future GP2 race winner Nobuharu Matsushita, and the 2015 title battle went to the final round.

Such competition no doubt helped when he was called upon to moonlight with Prema after the team split with Brandon Maisano. Straight away the team wanted Cassidy for 2016, and he was back on board for testing in December. “It’s been great working with them so far,” says Cassidy, unaccustomed as he is to proper winter test programmes. “We did three and a

half days at the end of last year, not a huge amount compared to some others. There’s an amazing atmosphere around the team and everyone gets on so well.”

The F3 grapevine has it that Prema is putting everything into the championship attack of Lance Stroll, whose father has invested considerably in the team, but Cassidy doesn’t see it that way. “Right from my first day with Prema, something I was really impressed with was how the attention was spread across all four drivers,” he says. “At the end of the day, Lance wants to win the championship as much as anyone else, and he’s already shown he’s quick enough to fight for podiums and win in only his rookie season, which is impressive. I’m looking forward to all of us fighting it out at the front.”

The Prema association has come with the full cooperation of TOM’S, which loaned Cassidy for the Algarve and Nurburgring races last year, although he had to miss the Hockenheim finale as it clashed with the Japanese title climax, and was committed to TOM’S for Macau.

The team has also given its blessing to his 2016 F3 programme. “They’ve been really good about it and they just want me to keep racing,” says Cassidy. “In Japan, Super GT is what really counts and is the most important thing to the manufacturers, but they’re more than happy for their drivers to race in Super Formula because it keeps them sharp. It’s very similar for me with F3.”

Ironically, it was Cassidy’s Super Formula test at Suzuka, just after Macau 2015, that proved instrumental in landing his Super GT seat. The run came with Toyota-powered Kondo Racing, and he outpaced Stoffel Vandoorne and Stanaway to be the fastest non-Japanese rookie. “That test pretty much got me the GT drive,” says Cassidy. “The car was amazing and I was quick straight away, and I think that impressed them because I’d never even tested a GP2 or World Series car so I didn’t have anywhere near the experience of the other rookies.” With the Super GT deal done shortly after, Cassidy managed to get a first taste of

“TOM’S have been really good about it and just want to keep me racing”



Taking a stunning third position at Macau in 2014



Cassidy will compete with Prema in European F3

GT500 in a Bridgestone tyre test at Sepang before Christmas: “It’s an awesome car with so much power, but it has a lot of similarities to an F3 to drive with so much grip and downforce.” Quicker than a DTM? “Maybe, but you have to remember there’s a tyre war in Super GT so it’s not really fair to compare them.”

Cassidy’s Toyota deal meant an end to his place on the BMW Junior Team and a cancellation of his projected debut DTM test at Jerez, but he’s philosophical about that and anyway, at the age of 21, he is now a professional driver in the Japanese equivalent.

He has effectively been given a huge seal of approval by being chosen to campaign the lead Lexus: the #36 RC F is the brand’s totem in much the same way as Nissan’s #23 GT-R, and Cassidy joins up with 40-year-old veteran and 2007 champion Daisuke Ito in the car. “I’ve only just really got to know him but he’s a good guy,” says Cassidy. “It’s great to have his experience alongside me and he has a championship under his belt – now it’s time for another one! I was surprised to be chosen for the 36, though. It’s special: I thought as the new guy I’d be racing the 37.”

He laughs at suggestions that he’s usurped Briton James Rossiter, who has been moved into the #37 alongside promising up-and-comer Ryo Hirakawa, instead pointing out that, like so many other drivers in Japan, Rossiter is a serious talent.

Cassidy knows that he and Ito have to try to outperform the sister Lexus in Super GT, and that he faces what will surely be his best chance to establish his reputation properly in Europe with his Prema-run F3 Dallara-Mercedes. Having said that, he will be forced to miss May’s round at the Red Bull Ring because of the clashing Super GT round at Autopolis: “It’ll be like I’m starting the season with three DNFs!”

“It’s fantastic to be in this position but it’s going to be an incredibly busy season,” he points out. “Not only because there are eight Super GT rounds and I’ll have nine European F3 events, but also because of all the testing in Japan. I know I’ve got to perform in 2016 because at the end of the day motorsport is a results business, and by doing well it can only help the future.”

With Prema he will almost certainly be back at the Macau Grand Prix in 2016. Should his season go to plan, and he walks back to the hotel again with *Autosport*, perhaps the discussion will be about a future that looks even more enticing. 🌟



One-off at Assen in ADAC Formel Masters in 2011

An unusual path

VERSATILITY IS A MUST if you’re a driver battling without funds, but Nick Cassidy has made it his speciality throughout his career.

His father and maternal grandfather both raced in New Zealand as amateurs at club level, but all that was scrapped so that the available resources could be put into young Nick’s karting. He then moved into car racing – incredibly at age 13 “because it was cheaper than going karting in Europe” – in the country’s Formula Vee equivalent, Formula First. Cassidy did the conventional thing by starring in Formula Ford 1600 and then the Toyota Racing Series, before his career twisted and turned down a number of curious byways.

Want to have a guess what his first race in Europe was? You won’t get it, so

we’ll tell you: ADAC Formel Masters at Assen in 2011, in a one-off with Ma-Con Motorsport: “Richie Stanaway had won the title with them and they asked him who the next driver from New Zealand was, so he recommended me.” (The association was rekindled when

“Cassidy has made versatility a speciality throughout his career”

Cassidy tested with Ma-Con’s F3 team in late 2014 as it worked on the ORECA engine project.) Shortly after that, there was a Formula Abarth outing at Mugello – “The Ferrari Driver Academy were interested in having a look at me” – that came to nothing because of

unreliability. One month later? Race outings in Australia’s second-tier V8 Supercar series, still at the age of 17.

Just past Cassidy’s 18th birthday, NZ folk hero Greg Murphy, who had been extolling the youngster’s talents in the media, was recovering from back surgery so put Cassidy into his Holden Commodore for the local tin-top championship’s enduro round at Taupo alongside Jack Perkins. They won.

More recently, Cassidy won on cameo outings in the Toyota TR86 one-make series at home, and, as a BMW junior, raced an M235i saloon in 2015, taking a class win in the Brno 12 Hours. He also made a Super GT debut in last year’s Suzuka 1000Km with the Bandoh team’s Toyota GT86 in the secondary GT300 class.



Racing Bandoh Toyota in Suzuka 1000Km



No Smoke without fire

Three-time NASCAR champion Tony Stewart is hanging up his helmet at the end of 2016. And he's making sure he'll be remembered — one way or another

By Bruce Martin, American Correspondent

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Throughout his career Tony Stewart has cast a large shadow over the sport, first as the 'Face of the Future' in the Indy Racing League and then as a three-time NASCAR Cup champion. Stewart's public persona is a throwback to the days of the legendary AJ Foyt, a larger-than-life personality whose temperament could range from good-natured bonhomie to extreme anger in just a flash.

That personality has carried Stewart through the best of times, winning the 1997 IRL title and NASCAR Cup crowns in 2002, '05 and '11, as well as racking up 48 NASCAR Cup wins in 590 starts at an average of one victory in every dozen or so races. Although he never achieved his dream of winning the Indianapolis 500 (he finished fifth in 1997), he has two wins at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway in the Brickyard 400.

His dramatic charge from behind to win the 2011 NASCAR Chase for the Championship was Stewart at his best as he won five of the 10 Chase races that season, drove from the back of the field twice to win the final race of the season at Homestead and finished in a points tie with Carl Edwards. Stewart won the championship based on number of victories in what remains one of NASCAR's most epic points battles in the Chase era. Stewart drove to the championship with the swagger of Foyt and proved that, when it came to raw racing ability, there were none better in the NASCAR paddock than the driver known as 'Smoke'.

That personality also brought the worst of times for Stewart, whose fits of temper are the stuff of legend. He can cut a reporter to shreds simply for asking a question he didn't agree with. He has never been afraid to

physically confront a fellow race driver, as he did with Joey Logano at Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, California in 2013.

From there, it only got worse for Stewart. He broke two bones in his right leg on August 15 2013 in a sprint-car crash in Iowa. The injury forced him to miss the final 15 races of the 2013 season. He wasn't 100 per cent recovered when he arrived at the Daytona 500 in 2014. He struggled through that winless season, but decided to compete in a sprint-car race at Canandaigua Speedway on August 9 — the night before NASCAR's annual race at Watkins Glen.

Another driver in that race, 21-year-old Kevin Ward Jr, spun out while racing against Stewart, climbed out of his race car and ran down the dirt track in a confrontational manner. Stewart's car struck Ward and killed him. After a thorough investigation, Stewart was not charged, but the tragedy had a big impact. He



Stewart won the Sprint Cup title in dramatic style in 2011

missed three Sprint Cup races after Ward's death but returned to finish the 2014 season 25th overall.

In 2015, Stewart struggled with a second-straight winless season, scored no top-five finishes, had just three top-10s and finished 28th in the standings. On September 30, he announced that 2016 will be his final season in NASCAR Sprint Cup.

Even before that farewell tour was set to kick off in Sunday's Daytona 500, Stewart could not stay out of the spotlight. On

January 15 he was involved in an altercation in Tulsa, Oklahoma with an off-duty Sheriff's Deputy who had been heckling him and making obscene gestures at the Chili Bowl Nationals.

Stewart went into the grandstands at the River Spirit Expo Center — site of the largest and most prestigious Midget Car

race in the United States — and confronted the man who had been loudly directing verbal abuse at him throughout the evening.

The heckler was Kyle Hess, a corporal with the sheriff's department. Hess was not on duty and no police report was filed by either Stewart or Hess after the incident — although, naturally, footage appeared on the internet. Stewart defended his actions the following week on the NASCAR Media Tour.

"I think the people who were there saw what happened, and that is all," Stewart said of the altercation. "If anybody wants to know what happened, they should have been there to see for themselves. [People] make judgments about us no matter what we do so I'm not going to try to justify or explain what happened there. Everybody who was there knew what happened, and you guys are smart enough to see on social media now the people who are coming out and talking about what happened." »

"If we won 15 races it would not make me want to come back"



Stewart later sharply criticised NASCAR chairman Brian France for being out of touch with the NASCAR garage area.

"I want to see Brian France at the track more," Stewart said. "I want to see him walking through the garage more. I want to see him being more active than just showing up and patting the sponsors on the back. I want to see him down there in the trenches with everybody and understanding what's truly going on. I think that's where he needs to be for a while."

Unlike his grandfather and father, who were both highly active in the garage area during NASCAR's long history, the third-generation France prefers the company of series sponsors, usually in the rarefied environment of hospitality suites, rather than engaging in the noise and bustle of the track. France also does not attend every Sprint Cup race.

"I would like him to be there because the stuff I'm talking about, I want to know before I leave that room that he understands," Stewart said. "I want to see he cares enough to be there, not sit there and get a report from somebody."

"I know Brian France cares. But there's a lot of things that get lost in translation between a driver going to talk to somebody in the [NASCAR office] trailer to the time it gets to him. Who knows what it sounds like by the time it gets up there — or if it even gets up there. He doesn't have to say anything. We just want to know that he's hearing what we're saying."

"I don't care what the repercussions are. I'm saying it because I care. I'm not trying to pick a fight. Nobody wants to disrupt the

applecart; nobody wants to make Brian mad. But we're all in it together. If it doesn't work for one, it doesn't work for all of us."

From outbursts such as this it's obvious that Stewart — and you can almost hear the refrain of Frank Sinatra's classic song spinning up in the background — is planning to go out his way.

Stewart should have had one last chance to win the Daytona 500 — the only thing missing from his outstanding NASCAR CV — and it was obvious he would be *the* storyline in that event.

But Stewart won't even be on the starting grid for NASCAR's biggest race. Instead, it will be Brian Vickers driving the #14 Chevrolet. In fact, Stewart may not be back in competition for at least three more months — or even longer — all because of a dune-buggy crash before the start of the season.

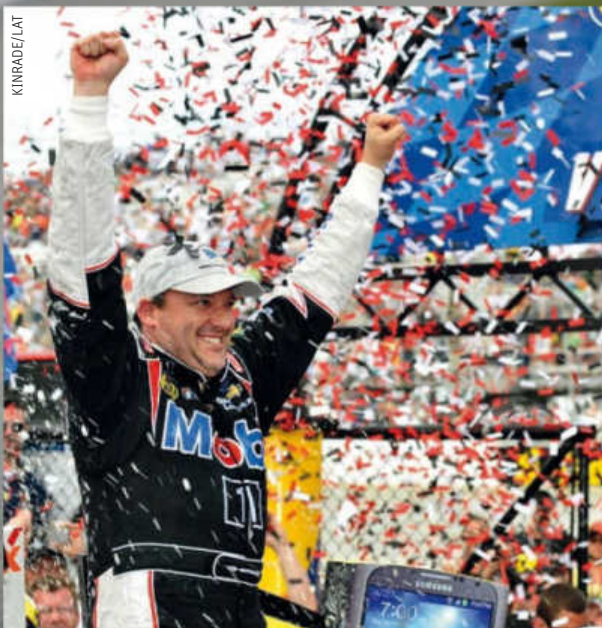
Stewart sustained a burst fracture of the L1 vertebra in the all-terrain vehicle accident on January 31 in

the California desert. After surgery, his return date is unclear.

It's the same type of fracture four-time IndyCar Series and three-time Indianapolis 500 winner Dario Franchitti suffered in a motorcycle crash in 2003. Even with no surgery, he was in a brace — and out of racing — for three months.

Stewart is like an old gunslinger of the American West whose time has passed him by. Although he realised it was time to leave this sport to younger competitors, Stewart is an adrenalin junkie who needs his fix of excitement in his life. That's why he continued to race sprint cars after breaking his leg and why driving a dune buggy around the desert seemed like a good idea.

"I'm not trying to pick a fight. Nobody wants to disrupt the applecart"



Above: Stewart nailed his last win at Dover, back in 2013

Main: 2015 season was arguably the worst of Stewart's remarkable career



So as NASCAR prepares to kick off another season with the Daytona 500, Stewart's absence will overshadow the event. NASCAR has not announced if Stewart would be granted a waiver to become eligible for the season-ending Chase for the Championship, but there is no guarantee after his latest injury that he could race his way into the top 30 and score a victory or two. After all, he hasn't won a race since Dover in June 2013.

Kyle Busch was able to use a waiver to win last year's NASCAR Sprint Cup title after suffering serious leg injuries in an Xfinity Series crash at Daytona, but the much younger, much healthier Busch did not return to action until mid-May. Despite missing 11 races, his championship eligibility was aided by a remarkable four wins in five races from the end of June to the end of July. In order for Stewart to do the same, he would need to go on an incredible hot streak starting with his first victory in three years.

Stewart's competitive fire remains, but the performance level has eroded. And that is why his position is far more difficult than what Busch overcame last season.

A farewell tour of any kind means little to Stewart; what he misses the most is having a chance to claim a victory in the Daytona 500 for the first time in his career. Otherwise, he would have walked away from NASCAR competition at the end of 2015. Denied the opportunity to compete in the 2016 Daytona 500, it's unclear how soon he even wants to get back into his race car.

It was obvious, however, that Stewart wanted to excel in his final season. He had dramatically changed his lifestyle and his diet in an attempt to be healthier and physically fit for the demands of his final season.

"I'm doing things I thought I would never do," he said before suffering the back injury. "If anybody has any questions how dedicated I am, that's their answer. I changed my diet and >>

NASCAR's big hitters on 2016

Another NASCAR season is about to begin with the biggest stock car race on the planet – the Daytona 500. It will be historic because two of the biggest names in a generation will not be participating in the race – three-time Daytona 500 winner Jeff Gordon is now in the broadcast booth after retiring last season and Tony Stewart is out with a back injury.

But there are plenty of other great storylines entering the great American race including the arrival of rookie poleman Chase Elliott. Here are the thoughts of some of NASCAR's grandee figures on what the 2016 season will bring.

RICK HENDRICK TEAM OWNER

Hendrick's cars have won the Daytona 500 eight times, but this is the first time since 1993 that he arrives at Daytona without Jeff Gordon as one of his drivers.

"I think we are better going into this year," he says. "We are definitely doing to miss having Jeff Gordon here. I think the team is fired up. We want to be contenders and win the championship. We want to do that every year but we had a heart-to-heart with everybody about this season and what it took to get better.



"I'm excited about Chase Elliott's rookie season because he has a lot of talent and is very mature for his age. We can't wait to get to Daytona. If we can win that to kick off the season we should be in good shape."

BRIAN FRANCE NASCAR CHAIRMAN

The grandson of NASCAR founder Bill France has been at the helm during some tumultuous changes, but he believes the dramatic decisions have helped keep up with the times.

"We had a lot of great things happen in the Chase and a lot of people thought that an elimination-style format in motorsports wasn't possible, and it wouldn't work properly," he says. "The reality is it's not only possible, it's the way to crown the champion in the most exciting form of motorsports.

"Our fans have rallied around the format. Our drivers, our teams have



done that. What you saw in year two was a real understanding of what it takes to compete in each of the rounds, the strategies and so on, and that makes the racing better.

"We're going to be fortunate to ride some things that worked well in the sport, in particular the level of competition, on into 2016."

started working out and swore I would never do that.”

The longer Stewart is idle, however, the more that motivation will likely increase. He expects to be back in the car but by then the season may be close to one third of the way complete.

“When I started in 1999 with Joe Gibbs Racing I didn’t have a clue when the end would be,” he said recently. “Here it is, the last year, and we are excited about it. The big focus is having fun and we will give it 100 per cent every week, try to win races, get in the Chase and contend for the championship and have fun in the process.”

His exit from the sport is far different than what another former open-wheel race driver from the Midwestern United States experienced in 2015. Jeff Gordon, who was born in California but honed his racing skills in Indiana, was NASCAR’s big-name young star when Stewart entered the sport in 1999. Both came up from the United States Auto Club (USAC) ranks and they had vastly different racing styles.

Gordon was smooth as silk and his racing style was steady. He often qualified up front and stayed there in the race. Stewart was a hard charger — a driver whose sheer grit and fortitude thrilled the crowd, as he fought and scratched and gouged and clawed his way through the field like the angry bear that he physically resembles.

In 2002, an even smoother, more prolific version of Gordon arrived in NASCAR named Jimmie Johnson. He would go on to

“When Homestead happens, no matter how the year went, that’s it. Goodbye”

win six NASCAR Cup titles but never captured the imagination or the interest of the fans. Former NASCAR champion Rusty Wallace has best explained why.

“He was too perfect,” said Wallace. “He had the perfect car and the perfect hair and the perfect wife and the perfect look and the perfect crew chief. Race fans don’t like anyone that’s too perfect.”

That is why Stewart is so popular. He is far from perfect. In fact, he may be the most unashamedly imperfect man in NASCAR and that is why many fans gravitated to him. He reminds them of themselves — just an ordinary, average guy.

While Gordon and Johnson often wore the latest fashions, Stewart dressed in bowling shirts. If the weather were hot, he would just throw on one of the gaudy-looking racing T-shirts that are sold at the dirt tracks of the United States.

Gordon had his farewell tour in 2015 and it nearly had a perfect ending. He was one of four drivers with a chance to win the championship in the final race of the season at Homestead, but came up short as Kyle Busch won the race and the title.

Some may have wanted to see Stewart go out in the same manner of glory, although now it’s highly unlikely. And in many ways, Stewart probably doesn’t care. Just like Sinatra, he did it his way — the only way that mattered to him.

“The reason I’m retiring is not performance based,” said Stewart. “When you go into your last season everybody wants to finish on top. If we won 15 races and the championship it would not make me want to come back next year. If it doesn’t happen it’s not going to be the end of the world.

“When Homestead happens, no matter how the year went, we’re done. That’s it. Goodbye.”

Gordon and Johnson might have accumulated all of the big race wins and championships during their careers, but Stewart will be the driver they tell the stories about.

And at the end of the 2016 Daytona 500, a driver other than Stewart will be celebrating the monumental career achievement in Victory Lane — but Stewart’s massive profile will be felt at the start of the NASCAR season because of his very absence. ❧





HARRELSON/LAT

DALE EARNHART JR

TWO-TIME DAYTONA 500 WINNER

The son of seven-time NASCAR champion Dale Earnhardt is 41 years old but the word 'retirement' is not in his vocabulary.

"I don't want to ever do it early," he says. "But I don't want to be here too long. You want to feel like the time is right, and they [Gordon and Stewart] felt like the time was right. I've said before that you want it to be your decision, you don't want to be knocked out because of health reasons, you don't want to be fired."



HARRELSON/LAT

You want it to be on your terms, and that's a lot to ask - to go out your own way.

"Hopefully when it feels right for me, I'll make that decision and not have any regrets."



LABOUNTY/LAT

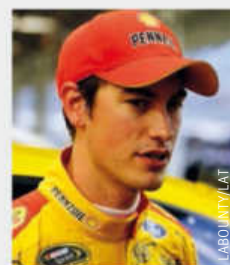
"WHEN IT FEELS RIGHT FOR ME, I'LL MAKE THAT DECISION"

JOEY LOGANO

2015 DAYTONA 500 WINNER

The defending Daytona 500 winner and one of the favourites to win the championship in 2015 before Matt Kenseth crashed into him at Martinsville, Logano is confident of another run at the title.

"We want to win trophies for Roger Penske and win a championship," he says. "Anything less than that we don't consider success. I am proud of what we have done over the last three years I have been at Team



LABOUNTY/LAT

Penske, and of being able to improve each season. The first year we won one race, then five and now six. It gets harder as you keep going but we have to. That is what keeps us driven."



HARRELSON/LAT



Autosport's eight to watch

Sixteen drivers will reach the 10-race Chase for the Championship eliminator, which kicks off at Chicagoland on September 18. All race winners who have contested the full season and made the top 30 in

the points, plus as many other leading scorers as required to make up the 16, go through. In exceptional circumstances a driver such as Tony Stewart could be granted a waiver after missing the start of the season,

provided he is successful enough when he returns – as with Kyle Busch last year.

The Chase comprises three eliminator stages of three races, which whittles the 16 down to a four-driver shootout at

Homestead on November 20 to decide the champion.

Here's our choice of eight names best-placed to succeed Kyle Busch as Sprint Cup winner, as well as our picks for the full Chase line-up.

KEVIN HARVICK

STEWART-HAAS RACING

After winning the 2014 NASCAR Sprint Cup championship, Harvick nearly made it two in a row last season but fell just short and lost out to Kyle Busch. Harvick remains on top of his game at Stewart-Haas Racing and, with Tony Stewart sidelined with a back injury, Harvick is the undisputed leader of this operation.



MATT KENSETH

JOE GIBBS RACING

Always considered a fair man, Kenseth's career image has been tarnished by taking retribution against Joey Logano at Martinsville Speedway in the Chase. Kenseth will not let that moment define his career, and the 2003 champion has the car and the team to become one of the 'Final Four' drivers in this year's championship.



JOEY LOGANO

TEAM PENSKE

This young driver learned about vigilante justice the hard way when he was literally knocked out of the Chase in the late rounds by rival Matt Kenseth. Earlier Logano had knocked Kenseth out of the way for the win in Kansas. In the next elimination round, Kenseth made sure Logano got payback. A new season brings new hopes for him.



KYLE LARSON

CHIP GANASSI RACING

One of the top young race drivers in the United States who came up through the USAC open-wheel ranks, Larson has been billed as a star of the future. But he enters his third full season of NASCAR Sprint Cup searching for his first career Cup win. Look for him to get it this year, and that will be enough to advance him into The Chase.



DALE EARNHARDT JR

HENDRICK MOTORSPORTS

When he arrived in NASCAR nearly 20 years ago, Earnhardt was young, immature and often lacked confidence. As the son of NASCAR legend Dale Earnhardt he was simply following his father's career path. Always popular, Earnhardt has finally found his comfort zone. He is calm, relaxed and confident, and ready to challenge.



BRAD KESELOWSKI

TEAM PENSKE

One of the top drivers in Sprint Cup, the 2012 series champion is looking for a return to form – and at Penske he has a team capable of winning the championship. This is a driver good for two or three wins a season, and in this age of The Chase where "win and you're in", that is more than enough for him to make the Chase field.



JIMMIE JOHNSON

HENDRICK MOTORSPORTS

When Johnson didn't advance out of the first round of the Chase in 2015 it was a major upset. Many had him as a favourite to make it to the final round of four. Even Johnson was in shock when he would have to spend the final seven races as an also-ran in the championship. It's time for redemption for this six-time champion.



KURT BUSCH

STEWART-HAAS RACING

A year ago NASCAR suspended Busch for an alleged domestic-violence incident against his former girlfriend. Busch had to miss the start of the season, but came back a calmer, more secure individual. It didn't take him long to return to Victory Lane. This year, without all the drama, Busch is back for more wins.



THE
OTHER
EIGHT
WHO
SHOULD
MAKE
THE
CHASE

CHASE
ELLIOTT

KYLE
BUSCH

CARL
EDWARDS

GREG
BIFFLE

CLINT
BOWYER

KYLE
LARSON

MARTIN
TRUEX JR

AJ
ALLMENDINGER



NASCAR 2016 ENTRY LIST

DRIVER	TEAM	MANUFACTURER
1 Jamie McMurray	Chip Ganassi Racing	Chevrolet
2 Brad Keselowski	Team Penske	Ford
3 Austin Dillon	Richard Childress Racing	Chevrolet
4 Kevin Harvick	Stewart-Haas Racing	Chevrolet
5 Kasey Kahne	Hendrick Motorsports	Chevrolet
6 Trevor Bayne	Roush Fenway Racing	Ford
7 Regan Smith	Tommy Baldwin Racing	Chevrolet
10 Danica Patrick	Stewart-Haas Racing	Chevrolet
11 Denny Hamlin	Joe Gibbs Racing	Toyota
13 Casey Mears	Germain Racing	Chevrolet
14 Tony Stewart	Stewart-Haas Racing	Chevrolet
15 Clint Bowyer	HScott Motorsports	Chevrolet
16 Greg Biffle	Roush Fenway Racing	Ford
17 Ricky Stenhouse Jr	Roush Fenway Racing	Ford
18 Kyle Busch	Joe Gibbs Racing	Toyota
19 Carl Edwards	Joe Gibbs Racing	Toyota
20 Matt Kenseth	Joe Gibbs Racing	Toyota
21 Ryan Blaney	Wood Brothers Racing	Ford
22 Joey Logano	Team Penske	Ford
23 David Ragan	BKRacing	Toyota
24 Chase Elliott	Hendrick Motorsports	Chevrolet
27 Paul Menard	Richard Childress Racing	Chevrolet
31 Ryan Newman	Richard Childress Racing	Chevrolet
32 Bobby Labonte Jeffrey Earnhardt	Go Fas Racing	Ford
34 Chris Buescher	Front Row Motorsports	Ford
38 Landon Cassill	Front Row Motorsports	Ford
41 Kurt Busch	Stewart-Haas Racing	Chevrolet
42 Kyle Larson	Chip Ganassi Racing	Chevrolet
43 Aric Almirola	Richard Petty Motorsports	Ford
44 Brian Scott	Richard Petty Motorsports	Ford
46 Michael Annett	HScott Motorsports	Chevrolet
47 AJ Allmendinger	JTG Daugherty Racing	Chevrolet
48 Jimmie Johnson	Hendrick Motorsports	Chevrolet
78 Martin Truex Jr	Furniture Row Racing	Toyota
83 Michael Waltrip Matt DiBenedetto	BKRacing	Toyota
88 Dale Earnhardt Jr	Hendrick Motorsports	Chevrolet
95 Michael McDowell Ty Dillon	Circle Sport Leavine Family Racing	Chevrolet
98 Cole Whitt	Premium Motorsports	Ford

KEVIN HARVICK 2014 SPRINT CUP CHAMPION

Harvick won the 2014 NASCAR Sprint Cup Championship in the current 'Final Four' format. He fell just short of a second-straight title last year to Kyle Busch.

"For us, I'm excited to go to the racetrack, whether we lost last week or won last week," Harvick says. "We're ready to go back to the track and compete, and that's what drives us on a week-to-week basis. Figure out what you did wrong and move forward. So we didn't dwell on Homestead [the



final round of 2015] at all. I mean, if we hadn't have won [the title] in 2014, I probably would have dwelled on '15 a little bit more. But we won in '14, we lost in '15, and we're not going to win them all."



"WE WON IN '14, WE LOST IN '15, AND WE'RE NOT GOING TO WIN THEM ALL"

DENNY HAMLIN 26-TIME SPRINT CUP RACE WINNER

Another driver hoping to win his first Daytona 500, Hamlin believes he's getting closer. He finished 30th in his first run at the event, in 2006, and second in 2014.

"It seems like we've won just about everything under the sun when it comes to those exhibition races or the duel races or the Unlimiteds, and we just haven't won the 500," he says. "It's coming. We know that it's bound to happen."

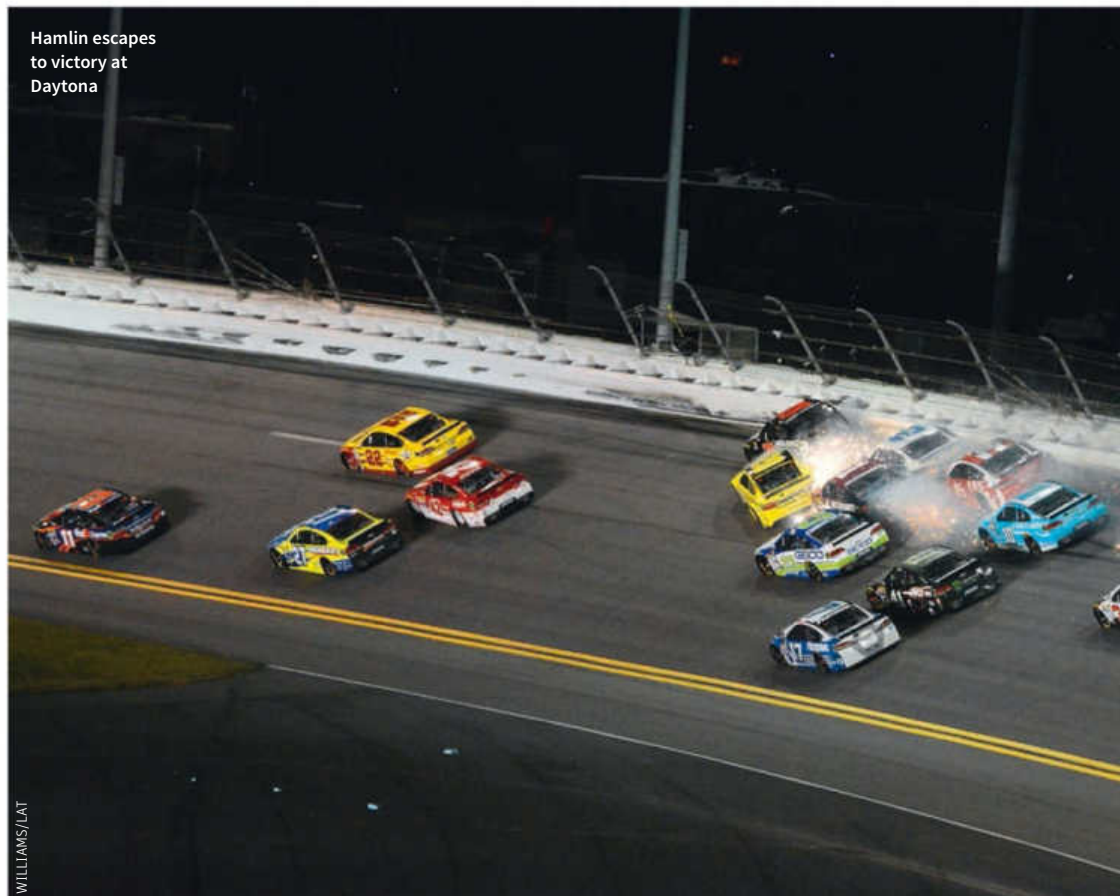
"We've had a lot of guys in a position to win over the past 10 years



since I've been there. I think we've finished in the top five for three of the last four or five races, something like that.

"We've been getting closer, getting closer, and it's going to happen. But hopefully it's going to be this year."





Hamlin escapes to victory at Daytona

Hamlin on top in wild NASCAR shootout

NASCAR SPRINT UNLIMITED
DAYTONA (USA)
FEBRUARY 13

DENNY HAMLIN LED HOME A BATTLE-TORN eight-car field to win NASCAR's season-opening Sprint Unlimited exhibition race at the Daytona superspeedway on Saturday night.

Hamlin and Brad Keselowski dominated on the night, leading all but 14 laps between them, but it was the Joe Gibbs Racing Toyota driver who became the first racer to triumph under NASCAR's all-new overtime rules, in a race interrupted by three multi-car crashes.

Brian Vickers, substituting for the injured Tony Stewart at Stewart Haas Racing, suffered a right-rear tyre failure entering Turn 1 on lap 23, instigated the first major seven-car accident that caught up pre-race favourite Dale Earnhardt Jr and team-mates Kevin Harvick and Kurt Busch.

Long-time frontrunners Keselowski and Carl Edwards prompted the second of the race's major wrecks with just three of the original 75 laps left to run, in a crash that also eliminated reigning Sprint Cup champion Kyle Busch.

That caution pushed the race to overtime, adding four laps to the tally, only for it to end under caution anyway after Hamlin's team-mate Matt Kenseth triggered a six-car shunt on the second of the two overtime laps.

This allowed Hamlin, carrying battle damage of his own after a hit from a spinning Ricky Stenhouse Jr early in the race, to cruise home

ahead of the Penske Ford of last year's Daytona 500 winner Joey Logano.

Paul Menard was third, from Kyle Larson, Casey Mears, and a recovering Stenhouse.

Just eight cars made it to the chequered flag, with only two – Logano and Larson – completing the race unscathed.

Six-time champion and poleman Jimmie Johnson's race came to an end after 43 laps after a wild spin on the backstretch left him mired in the midfield, the front end of his Hendrick Motorsports Chevy badly damaged.

Johnson's team-mate Kasey Kahne was another driver who failed to make it to the chequered flag, retiring late in the race after Jamie McMurray tipped his Chevy into the wall.

McMurray started 24th of the limited 25-car field, but made steady progress in the early stages of the race to lead, only to be eliminated in the final multi-car crash.

Aside from the spate of accidents, one other point of concern on the night was debris, as Keselowski was forced to abandon his early lead after a plastic bag became trapped in the front grille of his Penske Ford, causing it to overheat.

RESULTS

1 Denny Hamlin (Toyota Camry), 79 laps in 1h32m16s;
2 Joey Logano (Ford Fusion); **3 Paul Menard (Chevrolet SS)**;
4 Kyle Larson (Chevy); **5 Casey Mears (Chevy)**; **6 Ricky Stenhouse Jr (Ford)**; **7 Kurt Busch (Chevy)**; **8 Austin Dillon (Chevy)**; **9 Brad Keselowski (Ford)**; **10 Greg Biffle (Ford)**.



Norris leads Markelov, Piquet and Habsburg

CAMERON

Lando hope and glory for GP and title

TOYOTA RACING SERIES

MANFEILD (NZ)

FEBRUARY 13-14

ROUND 5/5

LANDO NORRIS FINISHED THE TOYOTA Racing Series with a triple triumph as he won the series championship, the Manfeild round and the New Zealand Grand Prix. It was a fitting reward for the 16-year-old Briton, who had dominated most of the five-round series.

Norris started from pole for the GP – the final race – and led all 35 laps, though his margin was never a big one. “I got a pretty good start then had to defend through a few corners and after that there was just a couple of restarts I needed to get right,” Norris said.

“I pretty much tried as hard as I could all race, and I didn’t look after the tyres at all.”

Russian GP2 driver Artem Markelov grabbed second when he jumped Brazilian Pedro Piquet after one of the restarts.

At the final corner of the race Piquet overtook Markelov – earning a 30-second penalty for passing under double-yellow flags, being waved because Theo Bean’s car was parked on the outside. That penalty elevated Austrian Ferdinand Habsburg to third in the race, ahead of Kiwi James Munro and Australian Thomas Randle.

Force India protege Jehan Daruvala finished second in the championship after Manfeild finishes of fourth, second and seventh. Kiwi Brendon Leitch was third, with Habsburg fourth and Piquet fifth.

Norris led race one after a perfect launch from second on the grid but Habsburg mugged him at Turn 1 after a restart. “I just went for it round the outside and hoped for

the best,” Habsburg grinned. Later, Norris ran wide at Turn 1 and Munro grabbed second.

Leitch started from fourth on the partially reversed grid for race two, but shot to the front by the end of the first lap and thereafter had the race to himself, finishing ahead of Daruvala, with Pole Antoni Ptak third and Norris fourth.

BERNARD CARPINTER

RESULTS

Race 1 1 Ferdinand Habsburg, 20 laps in 25m35.551s; 2 James Munro, +1.003s; 3 Lando Norris; 4 Jehan Daruvala; 5 Brendon Leitch; 6 Taylor Cockerton. **Race 2 1 Leitch**, 15 laps in 16m51.966s; 2 Daruvala, +0.978s; 3 Antoni Ptak; 4 Norris; 5 Cockerton; 6 Munro. **Race 3 1 Norris**, 35 laps in 39m43.893s; 2 Artem Markelov, +2.167s; 3 Habsburg; 4 Munro; 5 Tom Randle; 6 Cockerton. **Points 1 Norris, 924**; 2 Daruvala, 792; 3 Leitch, 757; 4 Habsburg, 727; 5 Pedro Piquet, 712; 6 Guan Yu Zhou, 687.

Dubourg repels Lagorce

ANDROS TROPHY

ST DIE DES VOSGES (F)

FEBRUARY 13

ROUND 7/7

FRANCK LAGORCE DID HIS BEST TO complete his comeback charge to claim the Andros Trophy title, and even led the points halfway through the finale, only for season-long leader Jean-Baptiste Dubourg to reassert himself and wrap things up.

Benjamin Riviere was supreme in the first leg on the slushy St Die oval, his Citroen topping qualifying and speeding away in the final as a frantic battle took place for second.

Dubourg held the spot until mid-race, when his Renault whacked the barrier. Lagorce snuck his Dacia into second ahead of the Mazda of Jean-Philippe Dayraut, with Dubourg continuing to take fourth.

Crucially, Dubourg topped qualifying for the second leg, but Olivier Panis got the jump and his Audi slithered away as once again battle raged for second. Dubourg held on for second while Toomas Heikkinen passed Mazda team-mate Dayraut for third, and Lagorce crashed out.

Matthieu Vaxiviere claimed the Electric crown, although it was Aurelien Panis and Louis Gervoson who claimed the victories.

RESULTS

Final 1 1 Benjamin Riviere (Citroen DS3), 8 laps in 3m03.119s; 2 Franck Lagorce (Dacia Lodgy), +6.451s; 3 Jean-Philippe Dayraut (Mazda 3); 4 Jean-Baptiste Dubourg (Renault Clio 3); 5 Adrien Tambay (Audi A1 Quattro); 6 Andrea Dubourg (Renault). **Final 2 1 Olivier Panis (Audi)**, 8 laps in 2m59.570s; 2 J-B Dubourg, +3.672s; 3 Toomas Heikkinen (Mazda); 4 Dayraut; 5 Riviere; 6 Lagorce. **Points 1 J-B Dubourg, 604**; 2 Lagorce, 593; 3 Riviere, 563; 4 Tambay, 558; 5 Panis, 553; 6 Dayraut, 544.



Dubourg took maiden Andros title

B BADE

IN BRIEF



NZ TOURING CARS

Simon Evans struck back to win the penultimate round of the championship at Manfeild, pipping V8 Supercar driver Andre Heimgartner, who had taken the previous two rounds. Evans (leading Heimgartner, above) won the first two races but Heimgartner claimed the feature event after passing Evans late in the race in a move that lasted four corners. Both drove Holden Commodores.

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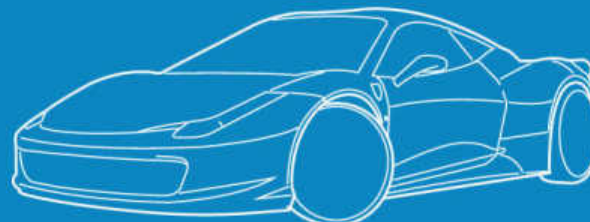
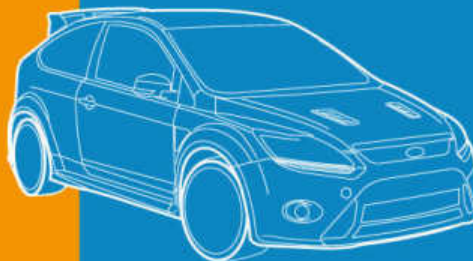
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RECRUITMENT

LEAD AERODYNAMIC DESIGN ENGINEER - REF: 2069

We are seeking a Lead Aerodynamic Mechanical Design Engineer to join our Aerodynamics department. This role will involve design of components for use throughout the Aerodynamics department, this includes the wind tunnel model, full size car and R&D parts. You will have a degree in an Engineering discipline/HND with an engineering apprenticeship together with extensive experience of designing in motorsport, or be able to demonstrate transferable engineering experience. A good working knowledge of essential CAD packages and related software is desirable.

SOFTWARE ENGINEER - REF: 2065

The Electronics and Control department at Williams is responsible for a variety of projects for the control and monitoring of systems on the car. Many of these require interfacing to the user via a PC, or to other software. To support this increasing workload, we are seeking a graduate (or equivalent) Software Engineer, either newly qualified or with a few years relevant experience. You should be able to demonstrate skill in Windows programming, and must have proven experience using C#, WPF, .NET, WINFORMS, and Visual Studio. Knowledge of embedded software development and Simulink would be desirable.

WILLIAMS

MOTORSPORT JOBS



HR10022016 – MODEL MAKER (WIND TUNNEL ROTATING NIGHT SHIFT)

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The successful candidate will have a recognised apprenticeship or training qualification and previous experience of model making, laminating, machining and wind tunnel testing. Excellent communication skills and the ability to work to tight timescales and deadlines without compromising on accuracy are essential. The successful candidate will also be highly motivated, work well under pressure, and have a hands on approach, along with proven problem solving skills.

To apply for this role please send your CV with your salary and notice period to recruitment@redbullracing.com

CLOSING DATE FOR APPLICATIONS – FRIDAY 26TH FEBRUARY 2016

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HR150116 – AERODYNAMICS DESIGN ENGINEER

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The primary responsibilities of the role will be focused on working alongside the Aerodynamics, utilising your skills in solid modelling and surfacing using NX CAD package with a creative approach to generate and develop designs for our Formula one wind tunnel development programmes.

Applicants interested in applying for this position will be a self-motivator with a proactive approach, and be able to maintain an exceptional level of detail when working to tight timescales, often with minimum supervision.

The successful applicants will have an engineering background preferably in either the Automotive or Aerospace Industries.

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HR15021601 – GARAGE TYRE TECHNICIAN

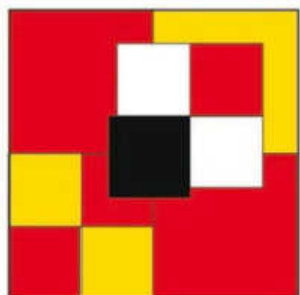
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EBREY

AUSSIE JOINS DOUBLE R RACING

Australian Formula 4 Championship racer Zane Goddard will race in MSA Formula this year with Double R Racing.

The 16-year-old, who finished ninth in his domestic series last year, joins compatriot and Red Bull junior Luis Leeds in moving to the UK equivalent, which uses the same Mygale chassis and Ford engine.

"I feel extremely privileged to compete overseas this year in MSA Formula with Double R," he said. "It will be a great chance and a big challenge to race against top-quality drivers from all corners of the globe. I can't wait to get across to Britain, meet my team and get into my car for the first time and acclimatise with my new surroundings."

Team boss Anthony Hieatt (above) added: "Zane is a decent pedaller. He knows the Mygale cars and the tyres so hopefully he will be running at the front."

F1-backed kart series to pay for racers' rookie MSA seasons

THE FORMULA ONE MANAGEMENT-BACKED Formula Kart Stars series is taking its champions directly onto the single-seater ladder with a fully funded drive in the MSA Formula.

Scottish talent Ross Martin, the 2015 FKS champion, was announced at last month's *Autosport International* as moving into MSA with Fortec Motorsports.

FKS organisers have now revealed the partnership. Although they would not confirm the length of the deal, the suggestion is that it will be long term. It comes hand in hand with an expansion into karting for Fortec – a move almost unprecedented for single-seater car squads – with FKS hoping that other teams will follow.

FKS chairman Carolynn Hoy said: "This [partnership] is incredibly important. As is written in our logo, FKS is the road to Formula 1 through racing and education, and MSA Formula is the next part of that journey.

We're aiming to help all the kids in our championship make the jump to MSA Formula.

"This partnership represents a major part of a credible pathway to Formula 1. We can now make sure the drivers are being seen by the right people and give them the best platform. I think it's going to be great, and the interest has been quite extraordinary.

"Fortec have announced they will run a team in FKS. They've got a huge wealth of experience and will bring that to the championship. I think that other teams will do the same, as it gives them the chance to work with drivers from an early stage."

Fortec boss Richard Dutton said: "The plan is every year the champion will get a drive with Fortec. It's a great chance for drivers and I think it should work well. Having a team in the series is a chance to have a working relationship with drivers before they reach MSA Formula."

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PORSCH CARRERA CUP GB

Cammish to defend title

REIGNING PORSCHE CARRERA CUP GB CHAMPION Dan Cammish will return to the series this year, and plans to also race in the Porsche Supercup.

The 26-year-old will return with Redline Racing after agreeing a deal at the end of last season.

"It was decided at the back end of last year that I would be coming back," said Cammish. "My sponsors had a great year and felt like they wanted to return."

"I had the option to go on my own or return with them. As a driver who spent most winters unsure whether I would be racing again, it was refreshing to have it decided already."

"I'm still working on a deal to race in the Supercup as well, and have got some good options. The plan was to have the British deal done so I could work hard on the Supercup as that's what I want to do."

Cammish admits it will be "tough" to repeat last year's domination of the Carrera Cup, when he took 11 victories from the 16 races. "I had such a great year and was never

off the podium, so I don't know how I can better that," he said. "But I'm still the same driver and I've got to dig deep and find the motivation to do it again."

"There will be some good drivers, but if anything I should be a better driver than last season as I have a year's more experience. I've got the same group of people behind me as 2015, the same engineer and mechanic, so I'm there to do the best job I can."

Fellow Porsche Carrera Cup GB racer Tom Sharp will also remain in the championship for 2016, again lining up for his family's IDL Racing team.

The 2015 rookie champion, who won one race last season after moving up from the Ginetta ranks, said: "Last year went perfectly to plan. It was always going to be a learning year. All I wanted was to build up the knowledge to be competitive in 2016 and not focus on results. The learning is done and we're here to win races from round one."

FORMULA RENAULT NEC

FORMULA RENAULT NEC FOR BRIT GILL

ALEX GILL WILL RETURN to the Formula Renault Northern European Cup this year with Mark Burdett Motorsport.

Briton Gill, 18, finished eighth in the championship last season with the Fortec Motorsports squad and he is hoping to mount a challenge for the title this year with the Lincolnshire-based Burdett squad.

Team head Mark Burdett said: "We've watched Alex's progress since karting and he's one of Britain's best young racers."

"He's done a few tests with us so far and has fitted in straight away."

● Formula Renault NEC will go ahead unaltered after a disagreement over the promotion of the series. Following talks between Renault Sport Germany and promoter Mick de Haas, it has been agreed that there will be no change in promoter for the coming season.

BRITISH GT

Malvern joins GT4 ranks in Porsche Cayman

MULTIPLE BRITISH single-seater champion Scott Malvern will join the British GT Championship this season, sharing a new Porsche Cayman GT4 Clubsport with Nick Jones. Malvern will race one of

Porsche's new machines for Simpson Motorsport, which is also making its British GT debut having run in Britcar and the 24H Series.

Malvern has racked up titles in British Formula Ford, Formula Renault and the

Walter Hayes Trophy. He and Jones have shared a Radical SR3 in recent seasons.

Malvern and Jones tested Aston Martin and Ginetta machinery before choosing the Porsche.

"It's been my aim to get

into GT racing for a few years," said Malvern. "British GT is the best national GT championship in the world, and is something people look to because it has international-quality teams and drivers."



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CATERHAM SUPERSPORT

Tuck makes Supersport switch

MAZDA MX-5 FRONTRUNNER BEN TUCK will step up to Caterham racing this year after signing up for the British marque's Supersport Championship.

Tuck, who landed the MSA RSF Young Driver award for the 2015 season, will move

out of Mk1 MX-5s to compete with the PT Sportscars team.

The 18-year-old scored two race wins in the BRSCC's MX-5 Championship last year, finishing third in the points during his first full season of racing.

CLIO CUP

Ciceley seat for Zelos Renault move

GINETTA JUNIOR frontrunner Dan Zelos will graduate to the Renault UK Clio Cup with British Touring Car Championship squad Ciceley Racing this year.

The 17-year-old, who finished fourth in both of his seasons in Ginetta Juniors, will race one of two cars being entered in Ciceley's expansion into the Clio Cup,

with MSA Formula graduate Ollie Pidgley in the sister car.

"I loved the Clio when I tested it," he said. "It's like a mini touring car and is very smooth and easy to drive. It's got more power than I'm used to and I'll have to get used to a front-wheel-drive car and slick tyres.

"It was a tough decision to leave JHR as I had a really

good bond with the team but it's always beneficial to see how other teams work. It was a chance that was too good to turn down."

Team head Russell Morgan said: "To achieve the results he did in Ginetta Juniors straight out of karting was nothing short of exceptional, and he is clearly ready to move up the ladder."



LAWRENCE

OBITUARY

David Stokes: 1947-2016

FOUR-TIME MSA BRITISH HISTORIC rally champion David Stokes died last week after a battle with cancer.

Stokes, 68, was the most successful driver in BHRC history, with titles in 2007, '10, '11 and '14, in Ford Escort Mk1s.

In 1968, on honeymoon with wife Sue, he was inspired by watching Roger Clark on the Scottish Rally. Stokes started with a Ford Anglia and moved into Escorts before a big accident in 1980 halted his career.

"After the accident in Penmachno, I was 33 and decided that my rallying was over,"

he told *Motorsport News* in 2012. "But in 2002 I decided to wind back from the business. Jimmy McRae was doing historics and I fancied a go at it."

Stokes barely missed a BHRC round in 12 seasons and was battling for a fifth title in 2015 when he withdrew from the Harry Flatters Rally with one stage left. Exhausted and unable to carry on, the extent of Stokes's cancer was diagnosed shortly after.

He leaves behind wife Sue, rallying brother Andy, co-driver Guy Weaver, and many friends in rallying.

IN BRIEF



THIRD BRITISH GT LAMBO FOR BARWELL

Barwell Motorsport will field a third Lamborghini Huracan in selected British GT rounds – probably including the Silverstone 500 events – as well as a full season in the Blancpain Endurance Cup.

COLLARD WEIGHS UP HIS OPTIONS

MSA Formula runner-up Ricky Collard may race in the Formula Renault 2.0 Eurocup or BRDC Formula 4. The 19-year-old tested both cars and said: "I haven't committed to anything yet but would love to win a UK title, so I may opt for staying at home this year."

FORTEC GETS REDDY FOR BRDC F4

Fortec Motorsports has signed Indian Tarun Reddy for the BRDC Formula 4 Championship. He competed in MSA Formula last year, and has also been contesting the MRF Challenge over the European winter.

OLIPHANT JR IN RACING DEBUT

The younger brother of Ginetta GT4 Supercup champion Tom Oliphant will make his racing debut this season. Jack Oliphant, 20, will compete in the Ginetta Racing Drivers Club series alongside his father Paul. "It's been fantastic following my dad and brother, and the GRDC really is the easiest and best way for a beginner to be part of a big, competitive grid," he said.

HARPER'S GINETTA CIRCUIT DEBUT

Ginetta Junior Scholarship driver Daniel Harper will compete with Douglas Motorsport in the Ginetta Junior Championship after moving out of Irish rallying.

DONINGTON PARTNERS MOTOFEET

Donington Park has formed an official partnership with the Coventry Motofest for 2016. Race and rally machines will appear on the Coventry ring road and Donington hopes to arrange for BTCC, British GT, BRDC F4 and Formula 3 machinery to join the event on June 4-5.

HARRISON MOVES UP MINI RANKS

Nathan Harrison will move up to the Mini Challenge series' Gen 3 F56 class with Coastal Racing, after winning the championship's Cooper Class in 2015.



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2016: a bonza season or too full-on?

By Marcus Pye, the voice of club racing

[@Autosport](#)

WITH THE AUTOMOBILE CLUB DE MONACO'S

landmark 10th Grand Prix Historique and Peter Auto's eighth Le Mans Classic sifted into the mix, even-numbered years are bursting at the seams with historic racing events in Europe. These high-profile alternate-season jamborees provide focal points for the most resourceful competitors and logistical quandaries for their preparers. For the poor enthusiast or marshal, though, 2016's calendar harbours a potential delight every weekend. Too much of a good thing or organisers reacting to customer demand? Only you can decide.

The Goodwood Road Racing Club's Members' Meeting on March 19-20 – a compact festival with a broad remit spanning Edwardian monsters to awesome ground-effect Formula 1 cars via achingly beautiful Group 5 sports prototypes – has been a universal favourite since its modern-era renaissance in 2014. Entirely complementary to its long-established Festival Of Speed and Revival Meeting in June and September, founded in 1993 and '98 respectively, the 74th MM kicks my programme off stylishly. It's a hard act to follow, but thereafter the high-octane rollercoaster barely stops.

Breaking with recent Spanish tradition, the FIA Masters championships – headlined by the photogenic three-litre F1 competition, which blossomed in both Pre- and Post-1978 splits last term – now opens at Belgium's Zolder circuit on April 9-10. Ron Maydon's initiative's first visit to the Omloop Terlaemen since 2005 starts a set with three UK showcases, at Brands Hatch, Donington Park and Silverstone, and of course graces the Nurburgring's Oldtimer GP line-up in August.

The HSCC's 50th Anniversary celebration feast starts late, but deliciously at Castle Combe on April 16-17. It includes cornerstone retrospectives at Silverstone (International Trophy, May 21-22), Snetterton (*Autosport* 3 Hours, June 4-5),

Brands Hatch Superprix (July 2-3), plus the splendid Croft Nostalgia Festival and Oulton Park Gold Cup in August. Under veteran ringmaster Grahame White's inimitable control, the club also masterminds the Donington Historic Festival (April 30-May 2) and the Silverstone Classic (July 29-31).

The September flurry of Zandvoort's sensational Historic GP – which has grown to attract 50,000 spectators in four years and happily has moved to avoid a clash with Oulton this time – the peerless theatre of Goodwood's Revival and Roadbook's wonderful Spa Six Hours (run annually since '93) on successive weekends marks the season's peak. By then it is roaring towards its climax at Portugal's Algarve Classic Festival on the spectacular autodromo outside Portimao in late October.

But, away from the brightest lights, I'm looking forward equally to three of the smaller events. Chateau Impney hillclimb on July 9-10 might clash with the British GP and Le Mans Classic, but made a great impression after a 48-year hiatus in 2015; the VSCC's glorious Cadwell Park meet a fortnight later and Castle Combe's fifth Autumn Classic on October 1 have all become firm favourites with the faithful. Combe's relaxed offering, which drew a near-capacity audience last year, is a perfect antidote to multi-day features.

That pick, spliced with the finest club racing, will keep me busy with lap charts at trackside or calling the action in a wide range of commentary boxes – with views from panoramic to minimal – as I move into my 40th year with *Autosport* in July. Would anything improve the wish list? Only if I could bookend it with a return to Australia's magnificent Phillip Island circuit next month to experience the ground shaking as 30 Formula 5000 cars mark the VHRR's extraordinary Tasman Reunion. And, perhaps, a visit to Florida in December for the HSR's inaugural Sebring Classic 12 Hour Pistons & Props pageant. 🏆



SANDERS AND WILLIAMS ADD VdEV WITH LIGIER

Duncan Williams and 16-year-old protege Jordan Sanders are to contest the VdEV Endurance Proto Series in Europe, driving the new Team Excool Ligier JS53 Evo 2 which they tested at Donington last Friday. "It's very stiff and has a lot of front-end grip," said Sanders, who will race the 255bhp Honda-powered CN car for the first time over six hours at Barcelona on March 18-20. The duo will also compete in the OSS championship at home with the similarly-powered Juno in which Sanders graduated from karts last autumn.



BRITISH TOURISTS WIN EAST LONDON FJ

Chris Drake (Elva 300, above) and Greg Thornton (Lotus 20) scored a victory apiece as the Historic Formula Junior Diamond Jubilee World Tour's opening South African leg closed at East London last weekend. Thornton's gearbox failed in the first race, which was won by Drake, but a superhuman effort by mechanic Tom Smith got him out in the second. Thornton then charged from the back, passing Drake – with lashed-up nosecone flapping – on the penultimate lap. The series resumes at Pau in May.

WHAT'S ON

How will new *Top Gear* treat motorsport?

MONDAY JUNE 12 1995. 6.30AM. My rose-tinted memory is that every morning of that summer began with Radio 1 playing the Boo Radleys' *Wake Up Boo!*, but that morning pretty much the first sound on my radio alarm was breakfast show host Chris Evans berating his newsreader for inadequate Canadian Grand Prix detail in her bulletin. The man now taking the wheel of *Top Gear* cares about his motorsport.

And with a co-presenter line-up featuring a long-time Formula 1 team boss, a sportscar racer, a factory Toyota British Rally Championship driver and a man who once crashed while fighting for the lead on the streets of Long Beach (though in fairness Matt LeBlanc is better known for other things beyond his Toyota Pro Celebrity race appearance), Evans's incarnation of *Top Gear* immediately has a stronger racing flavour than its predecessor.

The Jeremy Clarkson/Richard Hammond/James May line-up was actually unusually light on motorsport prowess for a motoring TV show roster. Rival *Fifth Gear*'s presenter list is dominated by racers, and 2012 GP2 champion Davide Valsecchi, US rally/rallycross man Tanner Foust and British Formula 3 race-winner Bruce Jouanny are among the stars of *Top Gear*'s international editions. The UK presenters often made their apparent lack of motorsport understanding an asset, with F1 joining 'foreign people' on the list of easy comedy targets.

But *Top Gear* mark two's contribution to motorsport's public profile shouldn't be dismissed too quickly, and the new roster having a stronger racing pedigree doesn't automatically mean motorsport will be better off.

Twenty-first century *Top Gear* might have sometimes played motorsport for laughs in a way that could alienate hardcore race fans, but

it's an entertainment show for non-specialist audiences first and foremost and it knew what it was doing. Casual viewers enjoying Clarkson and Hammond lambasting May's skills as he drove a World Rallycross car around Lydden still got to the end of that segment well aware that rallycross is an outstanding spectacle. You might've begun their Britcar 24 Hours film giggling at their BMW having 'Penis[ton Oils]' emblazoned its door, but you ended it convinced that club endurance racing was an incredible, life-affirming way to spend a weekend.

When motorsport was entertaining enough to have wider appeal (which is what it needs to do in the modern era), *Top Gear* celebrated it. And The Stig is part comedy creation, part reiteration that top racing drivers have otherworldly skills and attitudes that set them apart from others.

The new line-up will need to keep its enthusiasm for racing just as accessible, even though its level of expertise is much higher. When Evans revived TFI Friday last year, the segment with Lewis Hamilton was panned for being reverential to the point of tedium. *Top Gear* mark three is likely to be less cruel than its predecessor could be, but it's got to stay fun too.

And what will the wider world make of Eddie Jordan after his divisive performance in the BBC F1 line-up? His rants, off-the-wall responses to questions and sometime wince-inducing fan interaction caused a lot of eye-rolling among F1 viewers. The pre-recorded *Top Gear* format may suit him better and rehabilitate his broadcasting reputation. Or his signing might backfire massively — like so many ingredients in the new *Top Gear* recipe, it's an intriguing question mark.

MATT BEER



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HOT ON THE WEB THIS WEEK

YouTube **NASCAR STRIKES A HOMER RUN**

Search for: The Simpsons are headed to Daytona

OK, so it's just a plug for Fox's US coverage of the Daytona 500, but when this classic race meets The Simpsons it's hard to resist. NASCAR is not averse to taking the proverbial out of itself – see also last year's musical number featuring Nick Offerman (search for: America Start Your Engines).

The new *Top Gear* line-up has plenty of racing experience – even Matt LeBlanc has had a go...



TV PICK OF THE WEEK

TED'S TESTING NOTEBOOK

**Sky Sports F1
Monday 1600**

Monday is the first day of pre-season testing, so check out Sky Sports F1's coverage of the day's events after following it all live on autosport.com. As usual, Ted Kravitz will be wandering around the pit and paddock to tell you about the day's news – and you can catch your first video glimpses of the 2016 F1 cars running.



INTERNATIONAL MOTORSPORT

NASCAR SPRINT CUP

**Rd 1/36
Daytona, Florida, USA
February 21**

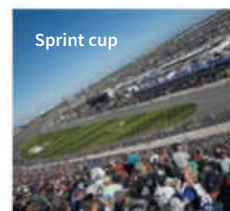
The NASCAR Sprint Cup starts again this weekend, with the Daytona 500 first up. Well known for moments of history, including Danica Patrick's pole position in 2013, this year's race makes headlines as 20-year-old Chase Elliott became the youngest polesitter on his first attempt.

**WATCH ON TV
Live: Premier Sports
1700**

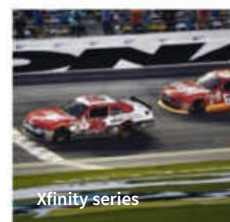
NASCAR XFINITY SERIES

**Rd 1/33
Daytona, Florida, USA
February 20**

Last year's Xfinity Series opener was one of the most dramatic, as Ryan Reed pipped his team-mate (and eventual champion) Chris Buescher for victory by just 0.89s at Daytona. The series has undergone plenty of change since, adopting the elimination format used in Sprint Cup.



Sprint cup



Xfinity series



Truck series

NASCAR TRUCK SERIES

**Rd 1/23
Daytona, Florida, USA
February 19**

A large pile-up halfway through last year's Daytona opener aided Tyler Reddick's charge to victory and set him on the way to a title battle with Erik Jones. Fortunes would reverse and a wreck at Mosport swung the title towards Jones, who held on to be crowned the champion.

THE ARCHIVE

Ayrton Senna sits in his Toleman-Hart during practice for the 1984 Dutch Grand Prix. His old-school 'timing screen' shows that 'Arry' is currently fastest ahead of Alain Prost

LAT Photographic





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INTRODUCING



ALESSIO PICARIELLO

HE'S WON 11 RACES IN THREE DIFFERENT series – spanning single-seaters and GT – in the past six months, and now the nomadic career forced upon Alessio Picariello is on the verge of bearing fruit.

This Belgian racer with an Italian dad impressed in Formula Renault NEC in his first full season of car racing, while on a shoestring budget and up against Sainz, Kvyat, Vandoorne and Frijns. Funds forced a step down to Germany's Formula Masters series, but Picariello defeated Mucke Motorsport team-mate Maximilian Gunther – now a Euro F3 race winner – to the 2013 crown.

“Already from my step from karting to formula cars, the first year I couldn't drive because of budget,” he says. “Somebody gave me the opportunity to do a race that I won, and that gave me a seat for the 2011 season, which went OK for a rookie season, without any testing. After that I got into Formula Masters, which helped me to be a bit bigger in motorsport but it didn't help me to reach a seat in the season after. I was one and a half years with hardly touching a race car until August 2015.”

Bar a couple of outings in the short-lived Formula Acceleration 1 in 2014 (he qualified on the front row on his debut), that was it until Hong Kong-based Absolute Racing invited him to contest the tail end of the Formula Masters China series in '15. Swiftly he became the man to beat, and he built upon that when a deal was thrown together to contest the final three MRF Challenge rounds.

At the same time, Absolute put him into the one-make Audi R8 LMS Cup, then its GT3 Audi in the Asian Le Mans Series. He won the finale and, more importantly, lapped very close to the times of co-driver and established Audi ace Christopher Mies. A GT career as a professional now looks likely. “It was really nice to have him [Mies] in the car,” says Picariello. “He could help to develop the set-up, and for me it was a good reference to improve and see where I am as a GT driver.”

“I love formula cars but if GT is my way I will go for it. I just think I'm lucky to be back in racing at the moment. If I'm in GTs I will fight to go to DTM, or to Japan in Super GT and Super Formula. It's not just Formula 1 – that was my dream, but at one point you have to be realistic and look at the choices where you can be successful.”

MARCUS SIMMONS



CV

Age	22
From	Trezegnies, Belgium
2015-16	4th in MRF Challenge 5 wins
	5th in Asian Le Mans Series GT class 1 win
2015	4th in Formula Masters China 5 wins
2014	Two rounds of Formula Acceleration 1
2013	Formula Masters champion 12 wins
2012	6th in German FMasters 2 wins
2011	6th in Formula Renault NEC
2010	Three rounds of Formula Renault NEC Class B



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Race calendar 2016

Four Sprint race weekends on MSVR organized race meetings

- 11 May Cadwell Park
- 11 June Brands Hatch Indy
- 23 July Oulton Park
- 29 October Snetterton

20 minutes qualifying, 2 races of 20 minutes each (optional Friday testing)

Four endurance race weekends with the Pirelli Endurance Racing Series, competing for class and overall honours

- 23 April - Rockingham
- 14 May - Anglesey (into dusk)
- 24 July - Snetterton 300
- 15 November - Snetterton 200 (into darkness)

Races now SIX HOURS LONG plus 1 hour each of qualifying and free practice (optional Friday testing)

Car Prices (excluding VAT)

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- Pre-owned cars from £25,000 (limited availability)

Racing fees

- Entry fees £750 for sprint weekends, from £1,800 for Endurance
- Full mechanical support including transport, storage, set-up and race preparation, plus pit crew at race weekends £1,500-2,500 per weekend
- Additional costs only tyres, fuel, and insurance
- Individual race-by-race deals from £2,500 - £5,000 depending on race and services required
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- 23 April – Rockingham
- 14 May – Anglesey (into dusk)
- 24 July – Snetterton 300
- 16 October – Nurburgring Nordschleife
- 4/5 November – Snetterton 200 (into darkness)

The series caters for drivers of all experience levels from novice to pro and for all types of endurance racing cars from humble hatchbacks through to flame spitting Le Mans racers.

Entry fees start from only £1,800 for six hours of racing

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david.hornsey@enduranceracingseries.co.uk
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